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ABSTRACT

There is a recognized need for more effective access by citizens to the proliferating multitude of available community services and facilities. The starting point of such access is being aware of the services themselves. Citizens need specific information quickly and a means of discussing it in terms of their own problems. Community information centers have developed as a result of this need. This study was initiated to investigate the possible role for the Government of Ontario in the organization and operation of such centers. Existing centers are studied in terms of goals, services provided, organization and procedures. It is recommended that community information services be expanded and that government support, financial and otherwise, be increased without government taking control of the programs. (SJ)

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Partners in Information

A study of community information centres in Ontario

Prepared for

Community Development Branch **Community Services Division**

Department of the Provincial Secretary and Citizenship

Government of Ontario

By

WILSON A. HEAD

LI 003 474

FOREWORD

Many of us have recognized the need for more effective access by citizens to the multitude of services and facilities available in our communities. The starting point for such access is being aware of the services themselves. And it is increasingly clear that general information about community resources available to people has become a fundamental requirement of living in a complex society such as ours. However, very few models have been developed which suggest the means by which general information services themselves might be offered to the public.

The community information centre project was launched in April 1970, by my Department through the Community Development Branch. The purpose was to investigate, through involvement and observation, the possible role for the Government of Ontario in the organization and operation of such centres.

This report on the project, prepared by Dr. Wilson A. Head of York University, represents 18 months of study and analysis of 15 information centres in eight cities in the Province. The services investigated varied in sophistication and size, but each added distinctly to the total result.

"Partners in Information" provides many new insights into the organization and operation of community information centres, and represents a valuable addition to research literature in this field. The conclusions and recommendations regarding a provincial role in this field will assist in our future deliberations.

Not only has the need to provide information about governmental and private services become keenly evident, but it has become increasingly clear that equal access to such information is one of the key elements in achieving full and equal citizenship.

It is my pleasure to commend "Partners in Information" to your careful attention.

Queen's Park
December 1971

John Yaremko, Q.C., LL.D.
Provincial Secretary & Minister of Citizenship
Government of Ontario

PREFACE

This study is the result of the interest of the Community Development Branch of the Government of Ontario in determining what role, if any, the Province should play in the operation of community information and referral centres in Ontario. A number of existing and several new centres were funded as demonstration projects in order to learn from their experiences. The present study represents the second phase of this examination; an interim report having been produced by Dr. R.A. Helling in March, 1971. This report represents a more detailed examination of the goals and operations of the projects. It should be kept in mind that many of the centres have been in operation less than a full year.

The research consultant wishes to express appreciation to the Director and staff of the Community Development Branch for their co-operation and support in the conduct of the study. Appreciation is extended to Mr. Don Padmore whose help in arranging meetings, contacting local centre directors, producing records, etc., was invaluable. I would also like to thank the directors and board members of the various community information centres who were interviewed during the course of this study.

As in many research projects the bulk of the work was done by research assistants. Miss Monica Wilde deserves special thanks for her very real contribution. Finally, this report could not have been produced on schedule without the untiring efforts of the secretary and typist, Miss Beryl Merrick.

Wilson A. Head
September, 1971

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are commonly used:

1. Community Information Centre.

   – a general term to describe a centre whose primary purpose is information – giving and referral. It is rooted at the community level and may take the form of:

   a) A central information service – the largest information centre of an urban area big enough to contain one or more neighbourhood information centres, either operating or in the planning stages.

   b) A smaller information centre – a term used to distinguish those centres located in smaller population centres which are not large enough to warrant neighbourhood information centres.

2. Neighbourhood information centre – a centre serving a specific area or group within a larger urban area.

3. Follow-up – the procedure whereby an information centre calls the inquirer, following referral or direction, to determine if satisfactory services were secured. The information centre may also call the service agency to determine if the inquirer actually made contact and was provided with appropriate services. It is one of the procedures used to ensure feed-back.

4. Feed-back – the process of channeling information back to its source in order to learn the effects of the service rendered. It is defined as the process whereby a community or neighbourhood information centre obtains some indication of the effectiveness of their own services and other services in the community.

5. Referral – one of the perceived functions of an information centre. It occurs when an information counsellor personally makes contact with an appropriate program or service agency on behalf of the inquirer.

6. Direction – This is a form of indirect referral, and again, one of the perceived functions of an information centre. It occurs when an information counsellor provides an inquirer with a telephone number and name of a person or agency to contact, as a way of answering his inquiry. The inquirer himself is expected to make the contact.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD
PREFACE
DEFINITION OF TERMS

		Page
CHAPTER 1.	INTRODUCTION	1
	A. How Centres Began	1
	B. How Centres Operate	1
	C. Government Involvement	2
CHAPTER 2.	THE PRESENT SCENE	9
	A. Aims & Goals of Community Information Centres	9
	B. Volume and Type of Services Provided by Community Information Centres	11
	C. Direction and Referral	14
	D. Information, Updating Procedures	17
	E. Follow-Up and Feed-Back	17
	F. Location, Accessibility and Facilities	20
	G. Relationship of Central Services to Neighbourhood Information Centres and other Community Service Agencies	21
	H. Publicity and Public Relations	23
	I. Staffing Community Information Centres	25
	J. Management Structure	29
	K. Funding and Financial Support for Community Information Centres	31
	L. Perceptions of Government Role	36
	M. Perceptions of Future Plans	37
	N. Satisfaction with Community Information Services	38
CHAPTER 3.	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	40
CHAPTER 4.	IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	44
	A. Expansion of Consultation Role	44
	B. Community Information Branch Proposed	44
	C. Provincial Conference Proposed	45
	D. Need for Increased Financial Support	45
	E. Eligibility Requirements	46
	F. Multiple Funding Machinery	46
	G. Financing Changing Patterns of Service	47
	H. Specialized Centres	48
	I. Facilitating Information Accessibility	48
	J. Serving the Immigrant Population	49
	K. Periodic Review of Centres	49
	L. Additional Recommendations	50

APPENDICES

		Page
Appendix A	Interview Questions for Directors and Selected Board Members	52
Appendix B	Suggested Questions for Agencies	63
Appendix C	Questionnaire to Inquirers	65
Appendix D	Standardized Record Forms	68

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE I	Aims & Goals of Community Information Centres	9
II	Perceptions of Goals by Information Centres and Community Service Agency Respondents	10
III	Sources of Contacts: Community Information Centres (June, 1971)	11
IV	Methods of Contacting Information Centres (June, 1971)	12
V	Volume and Type of Inquiries	13
VI	Category of Inquiry — Eight Community Information Centres	14
VII	Services to Which Inquirers were Referred or Directed	15
VIII	Sources of Knowledge of Intormation Centres	24
IX	Management and Auspices	29
X	Ideal Board Composition as Suggested by Directors and Board Members	30
XI	Desirable Financial Support at Three Levels of Operation	32
XII	Responsibility for Funding Community Information Centres	34
XIII	Source of Accountability	35
XIV	Inquiry Satisfaction with Services of Community Information Centres	38

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Easy, quick access to simple accurate information has become one of the most urgent needs of the 1970s.

In an increasingly complex society, where changes are continuing to take place almost overnight, the inability of many individuals and groups to cope with the resulting confusion has created a significant social problem.

To help people solve day-to-day problems, numerous voluntary and public agencies throughout the province are attempting to provide a variety of information services . . . in the face of three major problems:

(1) Such services can be useful only if people are aware they exist. Often those who need them most are least informed of their availability.

(2) The number and variety of existing services often create confusion and misunderstanding.

(3) The introduction of electronic data processing has resulted in a one-way "information overload". Citizens need specific information quickly and a means of discussing it in terms of their own problems.

Attempts to provide this type of rapid two-way communication have resulted in the development of community information centres.

HOW CENTRES BEGAN

Community Information Centres, though recent in Canada, began almost three decades ago in Great Britain where social workers, trying to help people through the dislocations of World War II, set up a series of local information centres called Citizens' Advice Bureaus.

Today these CABs, as they are called, are an established fixture in British life. As a result of their information-giving and referral role, they have become a recognized intermediary link in a wide chain of specialized services, programs and institutions in the local community. They answer questions on a broad range of matters, are open to all social classes, and are usually located in the heart of a neighbourhood, close to public transportation. The National CAB Council provides the name, staff training, information manuals and back-up consultation to local centres.

Neighbourhood Information Centres were initiated or expanded in the United States as part of the "war on poverty" program which began in 1964. Although quite different in conception, these centres serve many of the functions of the CABs in Britain.

In Canada, the present information and referral system is not nearly as well organized as that of the British CABs and comprises a variety of structures.

For example, many municipal governments have departments where individuals can bring problems on municipal services. In some local neighbourhoods, political parties have sponsored storefront and other types of information services.

On the commercial level, information is dispensed by "hot line" radio programs; in newspaper columns; through professional, scientific and technical services; and even travel agencies.

The result is a considerable variation in the quality, comprehensiveness, and accessibility of information services . . . a factor which may well contribute to, as much as solve the problem of "information overload".

In an attempt to overcome these disadvantages, information centres which are non-government, general purpose and non-profit have sprung up within many communities. Many were originally welfare information services that have recently expanded their operations to serve the total community.

HOW CENTRES OPERATE

Basically, these centres greatly resemble the British CABs, acting as intermediaries between the general public and a wide range of specialized services and programs.

Community Information Centres.[1] handle inquiries running the gamut from complaints about pollution levels, requests for welfare and free dental services, to replacing lost OXFAM knitting instructions. In many cases, calls are handled by referral to the appropriate service.

Sometimes the information counsellor finds a simple information request may mask the need for a specific service. For example, one caller asked where she could find references to Canadian divorce legislation. In the course of directing her to the library, it became appropriate for the counsellor to give the caller the name of a family counselling agency in case she wished to discuss her marital situation further.

Neighbourhood information centres have been initiated to serve specific areas or special groups within large urban centres. They are accessible to local residents who may be unaware of, or deterred from, using the central Community Information Service.

Workers in neighbourhood centres are also more likely to go beyond information giving and referral, and provide a direct service to individuals or groups. This may vary from writing a letter on behalf of an inquirer to organizing a car pool for senior citizens.

GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN ONTARIO

Since the war, government has become increasingly involved in programs designed to better the individual's way of life, e.g. employment, education and retraining, medical care, housing, legal aid and welfare. In recent years, research has increasingly emphasized the need for community information centres as a means of closing the gap between available services and the public they were designed to serve.

[1] Stewart and Starr, "Community Information Centres: A Proposal for Canada in the 70's". The report specifically refers to such centres as Community Information Centres.

Believing it must show some leadership in this field, the Government of Ontario decided to launch a preliminary investigation of its own possible role in establishing and operating such centres. Thus in April 1970, the Honourable Robert Welch, then Provincial Secretary and Minister of Citizenship, announced the present $50,000 study as follows:

> "Certainly an important aspect of citizen participation involves the awareness on the part of citizens themselves of the services and facilities available to them in their own community and province, and it is our intention to investigate the role which the Provincial Government might play in making this information more readily available on a community level. In the coming year, then, we hope to establish — in partnership with other levels of government — centres across the province and evaluate their operation in terms of administrative and financial arrangements, use of professional and voluntary staff, client satisfaction, and other matters relating to the collection, organization, and dissemination of information for advice and referral purposes."

It was felt that the study could best be accomplished on a pilot basis . . . by giving a series of non-recurring grants to aid new or existing centres in the province. Thus, the Government would be in a position to gain first-hand data on the collection, organization and dissemination of information in the centres. It would be better able to determine the long-range implications of government involvement in community information centres, and to make recommendations.

CHOOSING THE STUDY CENTRES

Certain objectives and characteristics were envisioned by the Government for those centres involved in the pilot study.

Objectives

1) The centres should collect, co-ordinate and provide information about existing services and facilities, both government and private.

2) Service provided to the public should be confidential.

3) When necessary, centres should provide advice as well as information.

4) The centres should consider information services primarily as a means of preventing unnecessary economic and social loss.

5) The centres should provide feedback information in order to identify service and resource gaps.

Characteristics

1) Centres should be neutral, objective and free from direct control either by government or an individual agency.

2) To encourage broad use by all people, they should not be identified with welfare or social action.

3) As a link in the existing chain of government and voluntary services, they should co-operate with, rather than overlap, other agencies.

4) The centres should be community-based to reflect local needs and support.

5) The centres should be centrally located, easily accessible and open to all.

6) When appropriate, the centres should be able to meet special language and cultural needs.

7) The centres should have follow-up procedures.

8) Information on services, collected and utilized by the centre, should be made available to sponsoring bodies and other information centres.

Allocation of Funds

Once funds became available for the study, the application of the objectives and characteristics was extremely flexible.

Communities wishing to participate in the study had to initiate a request for funds and demonstrate commitment, whether by offering financial support, office facilities, or volunteer staff. Some provision for actual delivery of services had to be demonstrated.[3]

In all cases, it was understood that funds granted were contingent on easy government access to the information centre and on close co-operation in basic record-keeping.

Financial Criteria

Desirable though not absolute conditions for the allocation of funds were:

1) A widely representative management board or committee to guide the centre, preferably separate and independent.

2) A seat for one provincial representative as a non-voting board or committee member.

3) Access to records.

[3] In Toronto, no conditions were imposed or suggested since out of a budget of more than $86,000 for the Community Information Centre of Metro Toronto, the provincial government's participation amounted to only $4,000.

Pilot Study Centres

Altogether, 15 provincially supported information centres are in operation and included in the research project:

Dial-Aid	Brockville
Central Information Service	Hamilton
Information London	London
Information Centre	Orillia
Community Information Service	Ottawa
Community Information Service and Tele-Care	St. Catharines
Community Information and Referral Centre	Sault Ste. Marie
Community Information Centre	Toronto
Earlscourt Area Information Project Centres at: Earlscourt Library Faith United Church ACLI in St. Alphonse's Church York Information Centre	Toronto
Thorncliffe Information Post	Toronto
Lawrence Heights Information Centre	Toronto

Four of the above centres — London, Hamilton, Ottawa and Toronto Community Information Centres — are central services. Several centres are new, since they were set up at the time of the provincial grant. The remaining are existing services which needed funds for expansion, support or co-ordination.

Where appropriate — notably the larger centres such as Toronto, Hamilton and London — grants were made conditional on similar financial commitments from other levels of government and the private sector. The goal was to establish workable partnerships which would provide guidelines on the Provincial Government's future role.

A key policy of the study has been to give researchers as broad an experience as possible for evaluation. Thus, centres were chosen which would reflect a wide and varied range of information services, as well as a total coverage of the province in terms of geography and population distribution.

To date, more than 20 additional proposals to set up or support information centres have been received. Since all available funds have been allocated, these centres have not yet received provincial assistance.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods used in this study were designed to help describe and evaluate the goals and operations of those Community Information Centres financed partly or wholly by provincial supporting grants in Ontario.

Interview-Schedules

To obtain systematic information about the various operating aspects of these centres, interview-schedules were developed for three different groups:

1) **Executive Directors:** It was assumed that the executive directors of all centres would be most knowledgeable about their actual goals, programs and day-to-day activities. All 15 were interviewed. In addition 33 board members were interviewed, based on a random selection of three from each of 11 centres. Four of the smaller centres do not have boards.

2) **Community Service Agencies:** It was felt that the views of community service agencies were essential to an understanding of the role of information centres. The executive directors of 10 centres supplied lists of such agencies to whom they directed or referred inquiries. Again a selection was made at random and questionnaires were mailed to 50 names, representing public and voluntary community service agencies. Some 36 completed returns were received.

3) **The Inquirers:** Executive directors were requested to ask every fifth caller, up to a maximum of 20 names, if he or she would be willing to be interviewed by telephone as part of the study. Two centres expressed concern about confidentiality, but the majority readily agreed to co-operate. Ethnic area projects, one centre in a small city and the befriending centre in St. Catharines were excused from this phase because of special problems. From a list of 152 names submitted by the centres 106 telephone interviews were conducted.

A total of 190 interview-schedules were then available for tabulation and analysis.

Control

As a control measure, executives from 10 centres not receiving provincial grants were interviewed by telephone. The basic questionnaire developed for board members and directors was used, omitting questions on operational detail.

Centres in this phase were selected to include:

1) Various geographical areas of the province.

2) Centres in local libraries.

3) Neighbourhood information centres.

4) Information centres with an action component.

5) Centres offering information in specialized fields, such as mental health.

Recording System

Much of this report's statistical material, concerning volume and type of services, has been derived from computerized records maintained by each centre. The recording system is based on one developed some years ago by the Community Information Centre in Toronto.

The standard form has categories with spaces for: Type of contact; type of inquiry; disposition of inquiry; service referred or directed to; and how the information centre was found.

Each month the forms are sent to the Community Development Branch by the individual centres although, due to limited staff and time, some smaller centres have been unable to meet this requirement.

The forms are then processed through a computer. "Print-outs" are returned to the participating centres so they may have a clear record of their own situation.

The purpose of this system is twofold:

1) To provide an accurate record of the types of requests handled by the information centre.

2) Eventually, to use this information as an instrument for measuring community service needs and trends.

As the forms were developed for a large metropolitan city, they are not completely satisfactory for some centres. The categories are still being developed, and space has been left for local items. Some directors have been using a "double-bookkeeping system", filling out the standardized forms for the province and another set for their own records.

The material in this study, therefore, is based on statistical reports for June, 1971, from only eight of the 15 centres. However, these include almost all of the community information centres and three neighbourhood centres.

CONSULTATION

Once the first draft of the three interview-schedules had been completed, a meeting was held with the executive directors of all centres to obtain suggestions for improvement.

A similar meeting was held to discuss the first draft of the report. Again, suggestions for change were incorporated in the final version.

Consultations were held, during the early stages of the study, with officials of the Federal Department of the Secretary of State as well as Information Canada.

In addition, continuous discussion with the staff of the provincial Community Development Branch has been extremely helpful in obtaining records and computer data for use in this study.

A CHANGING PROCESS

Just as society is in a continuous state of change, so are the information services involved in this study.

This report is based on a tabulation and analysis of the data obtained as outlined. But, as the development of information centres is relatively new in Ontario, changes were taking place in some centres even during the course of this study.

The findings must be examined with this dynamic process in mind.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRESENT SCENE

The material in this chapter is based upon the assumption and evaluation of community information centres in Ontario requires information about goals, purposes, program characteristics, staffing, financial support and other aspects of these centres. The material then reflects the findings of interviews with the three respondent groups included in this study: Directors and board members of all community information centres, staff members of selected public, and voluntary service agencies and enquirers.

A. Aims & Goals

In this connection directors of all community information centres included in this study, a total of 15, were asked to indicate what they considered to be the primary goal or goals of their centre. As indicated in the table below all directors of community information centres indicated that information giving and direction and referral are primary goals of their centres. It was recognized that many other community agencies also provide information as a part of their total program of service to the community. For the information centre, however, these functions are not secondary to some other service but are the central aspect of its operation.

TABLE I

AIMS & GOALS OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRES

Aims & Goals	Number of Respondents
1. Information giving	15
2. Direction & referral	15
3. Advice & counselling	14
4. Identify unmet community needs	9
5. Support establishment of neighbourhood centres	4
6. Other	3

Number = 15

The provision of advice and counselling was also indicated by all directors, with one exception, as a major goal of their centre. In most cases this advice and counselling tended to be short-term and over the telephone. It was usually done because, in many instances, the inquirer was not able to define precisely the type of service he required. In these instances, attempts were usually made to determine the precise nature of the inquirer's problem and to make the proper referral. One director of a community information centre has stated the problem as follows: "We are not a counselling service but in identifying the best resource for meeting a request, we may have to go deeper than the first expressed inquiry."

The identification of unmet needs was seen as a major concern by nine of the 15 directors of community information centres. The smaller centres usually located in smaller cities did not see this particular goal, "identification of unmet needs" as a strong concern. On the other hand, there were indications that some of these centres saw themselves as a kind of central clearing house for the total community, both professional and the general public. For example, some centres reported that they see their role as establishing contact between sources in the community and individuals in need of help.

Although there was general agreement by directors of community service agencies in their perceptions of the goals and functions of community information centres, there were also important areas of disagreement. As indicated in Table 2, respondents representing community service agencies were not united in their perception of the purposes and goals of community information centres. For example, while all directors of community information centres indicated information giving as a primary goal, only 20 of 36 community service agency respondents indicated this choice. None of the community service agency respondents indicated advice and counselling as a perceived goal for all community information centres. The number of respondents from the two groups with respect to, "identifying unmet community needs" was also significantly different.

TABLE II

PERCEPTIONS OF GOALS BY INFORMATION CENTRES AND COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCY RESPONDENTS

		A. Service Agency respondents		B. Directors of Information Centres	
		Number = 36		Number = 15	
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1)	Information	20	55.5	15	100.0
2)	Direction and Referral	13	36.1	15	100.0
3)	Advice and Counselling	0	0.	14	93.3
4)	Identify Unmet Community Needs	7	19.4	9	60.0
5)	Support of Neighborhood Centres	2	5.5	5	33.3
6)	Initiate Services to Fill Gaps	3	8.3	0.	0.
7)	Help Public Use Community Resources.	12	33.3	15	100.0
8)	Others	9	25.0	3	20.0

In summary, the findings of this section indicate a high degree of agreement with respect to the perception of goals by directors of community information centres. The perception of goals by the directors of community service agencies on the other hand, were characterized by scattered responses which seemed to indicate some unawareness or confusion about the purposes and goals of community information centres.

B. Volume and Type of Services Provided by Community Information Centres

The condition that the centres should collect, co-ordinate and provide information about existing services and facilities, was one of the criteria used by the Provincial Government in making decisions as to whether or not funds should be allocated to a specific community information centre. Access to these records was considered to be important in the study of their role and function in the community. An evaluation of the services of the community information centres, therefore, must include an analysis of the types of services required, sources and methods of referral and the number of individuals served during a given period of time. For the purposes of this study, the June 1971 records of eight of the community information services included in this study were analysed. For a variety of reasons, seven of the centres were not able to provide records at that time. This fact should be kept in mind when considering the description and analysis of the volume and the type of services provided by community information centres included in this study.

TABLE III

SOURCES OF CONTACTS:

Community Information Centres (June, 1971)

Source		Number	Per cent
General Public		4819	77.3
Health, Welfare and Recreation Agencies		686	11.0
Other Government Services		199	3.2
Professions & Associations		387	6.2
Business & Labour		131	2.1
Neighborhood Information Centres		12	.2
Number = 6234 (recorded)	TOTAL	6234	100.0

As indicated in Table III, health, welfare and recreation agencies, both public and voluntary, plus other government services, make considerable use of the information centres. However, the overwhelming number of inquiries are received from the general public. Directors of community information centres, however, indicate that the above figures relating to the general public may be somewhat misleading. They report that a significant number of the "general public" category may include representatives from government and voluntary agencies. This impression, of course,

cannot be checked since information centres do not require that inquirers identify themselves.

The use of community information centres by professionals and associations varies by type of centre. The central community information centres report a higher incidence of use by professional groups than do the neighborhood centres.

The incidence of contact with community information centres by neighborhood centres reflects the fact that only one neighborhood centre submitted statistical reports of contacts with central services.

TABLE IV

METHODS OF CONTACTING INFORMATION CENTRES (JUNE, 1971)

Method of Contact		Number of Contacts	Per cent
Telephone		5027	80.5
Interview		794	12.7
Correspondence		46	.7
Answering Service		380	6.1
Number = 6247	TOTAL	6247	100.0

As indicated in Table IV, a large majority of inquirers use the telephone as the method of contacting information services. Telephone interviews, as one director of a central service indicated, tend to take much less time than personal interviews. Neighbourhood centres on the other hand, stressed personal contact and local involvement and would tend to attract a preponderance of inquirers who walk in from the street.

The fact that 6.1 per cent of inquiries are handled by after-hours answering services, particularly by central services in the larger cities, is of considerable significance. Only the larger centres are able to maintain an after-hours answering service. The per cent would probably be much higher if other centres had the funds to keep their centres open longer hours or to afford a 24-hour answering service.

Volume and Type of Inquiries

The tabulations of information requested of community and neighborhood information centres during the month of June, 1971, reveals that a wide variety of needs were expressed by inquirers. Many of these needs were met by the provision of information by the information centre staff. This of course does not mean that the staff initially possessed all required information. It was frequently necessary to spend considerable amounts of time digging up information on behalf of inquirers. On some occasions it was necessary to make from three to a dozen telephone calls in order to obtain this information. Approximately one-quarter of all requests for information was handled by professional or volunteer staff without the necessity for referral or direction. (See Table V.)

TABLE V

VOLUME AND TYPE OF INQUIRIES

Inquiries for	Number	Per cent
Service	4801	77.1
Information only	1426	22.9
TOTAL	6227	100.0

The remaining three-quarters of all inquirers required a more sophisticated assessment and referral by the information counsellor. Several directors of centres pointed out that straight information giving alone is not sufficient for meeting the needs of the majority of inquirers. It was reported that many inquirers are not able to formulate their real concerns and that considerable skill and sensitivity may be required to determine the real problem.

A comprehensive knowledge of other community resources is essential in order for the information counsellor to meet the needs of these inquirers. Some respondents indicated that adequate knowledge and understanding of community service resources requires more than merely collecting files of brochures and other printed material. Personal contact with the staffs of community service agencies is essential to an understanding of their ability to meet the needs of many inquirers.

The number and type of inquiries received by community information centres are summarized in several categories and presented in Table VI.

TABLE VI

CATEGORY OF INQUIRY

Eight Community Information Centres

Information Requested	Number of Inquirers	Per Cent
Accommodation	454	7.3
Adjustment-Family, Individual	196	3.1
Child Welfare	419	6.7
Employment-Vocational	237	3.8
Financial	1116	17.9
Health, Physical, Mental	740	11.9
Home Services	160	2.6
Landlord and Tenant	104	1.7
Consumer	243	3.9
Education	283	4.5
Legal	93	1.5
General	857	13.7
Dental Care	18	.3
Government Service Information	146	2.3
Recreation and Vacation	647	10.4
Immigration and Citizenship	54	0.9
Pollution	24	0.4
Other	447	7.2
TOTAL	6238	100.0

While a wide variety of needs are listed in the table, it is significant that the largest single group of inquirers is concerned with financial needs. The data suggests that these inquirers are concerned chiefly with problems of eligibility for general welfare assistance. Physical and mental health, recreation and vacation and housing needs also rank high in this list of inquiries received by eight of the fifteen community information centres included in this study.

C. Direction and Referral

As indicated in the previous section, much of the information and services required by inquirers cannot be provided by the community information centres. Many of the services are operated under the auspices of government agencies; others are provided by local voluntary community groups. It is essential then that the community information centre direct and refer inquirers to the appropriate voluntary or public agency. A total of 4,238 inquirers were referred or directed to these services during the month of June, 1971, by the eight information centres which filed monthly statistical reports with the Community Development Branch. In view of the rather long list of agencies to which referrals were made, only those receiving the largest number of referrals are included in Table VII.

TABLE VII

SERVICES TO WHICH INQUIRERS WERE REFERRED OR DIRECTED

Referred to	Number	Per cent
Municipal Welfare	671	15.8
Dept. of Family and Social Service	70	1.7
Canada Manpower	62	1.5
Public Health	159	3.8
Senior Citizens Housing	118	2.8
Family Service Assn.	114	2.7
Day Nurseries	112	2.6
Recreational or Educational Facilities	355	8.4
Other Health Services	227	5.4
Other Municipal Services	184	4.3
National Health and Welfare and other Federal Services	171	4.0
Immigration	39	0.9
Ontario Dept. of Labour, Legal Aid, Ontario Housing and other Provincial Services	311	7.4

While the above table provides a general picture of the agencies to which inquirers were directed or referred, it is important to point out that it does not represent adequately the focus of the individual information centres. For example, one neighbourhood service reported that over 50 per cent of its inquiries were concerned with consumer information or education. On the other hand, a centre in a small community reports a similar per cent of its inquirers were concerned primarily with financial matters.

The large number of inquirers who were directed to municipal, provincial and federal government services again illustrates the importance of the public services. With the exception of small percentages of clients referred to the Family Service Associations, youth hostels, the Children's Aid Societies, Senior Citizens Clubs and perhaps some of the voluntary recreational agencies, virtually all of the reported referral and direction of inquirers were to public agencies.

Referrals, or even seeking out and securing information may take considerable periods of time, even for one client. One respondent states this problem as follows:

> "We use our personal contacts in agencies whenever we can. Since they know us, they will often give us assistance, information, and in general try harder to help us than the man on the street. If they can't help us, we ask for additional names. We pursue all the avenues we can."

Other respondents also felt that follow-up was becoming one of the time-consuming but essential services carried out by the information centres in the local neighbour-

hood. It was pointed out by several respondents that "it is almost impossible to merely give straight direction or referral to an inquirer, particularly to an immigrant".

Services to the Immigrant Population

Community information centres generally state that they exist to serve the needs of the total community. Increasingly, however, many communities are becoming the homes of a growing number of immigrants. A recent study reported that "Community and Neighbourhood centres must be accessible to the ethnic communities in those towns and cities where they form a sizeable block of the population."[7]

Most of the information centres in this study did have some arrangements for multilingual services, either through a staff member or other resource person in those areas containing a significant ethnic population. It appears, however, that none of the information centres included in this study made any significant effort to reach out to the ethnic population in their communities. Most of their publicity efforts have been produced in English. Thus, many of the centres have not reached a significant proportion of the populations in the communities in which they serve. And yet the information gap, according to a report of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, is perhaps one of the most serious problems facing immigrant groups as they attempt to adapt themselves to life in a modern, urban community. The report continues, "Easily available information about deeds, titles, mortgages, credits and the legislation covering these would prevent many mistakes, heartbreaks and sometimes tragedies."[8]

Direction or referral of inquirers from ethnic communities may present several difficulties. Bilingualism is essential but not sufficient for a counsellor serving a large ethnic community. The directors of the Earlscourt area project stressed that a counsellor must also have some understanding of his inquirer's cultural background. The counsellor must not suggest directions or referrals without first understanding these factors. For example, direction to a family planning clinic may be bewildering to a mother because this type of institution did not exist within the context of her old culture.

> In summary, direction and referral requires that the counsellor not only be aware of the resources of the community but also that he may be able to translate this knowledge into meaningful information on behalf of the client. This often requires that he be able to direct or refer the client to an individual person or staff member in the agency. This may often help the inquirer to overcome his fear of what he perceives to be a large bureaucratic agency structure. Some knowledge of the inquirer's ethnic and cultural background is essential in effective direction and referral.

[7] Ferguson, Edith, **Immigrant Integration,** A report of the Ontario Economic Council, 1978).

[8] **A Study of the Needs and Resources of Immigrants in Metropolitan Toronto:** Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Toronto 1978 (Mimeograph)

D. Information Updating Procedures

The effective operation of community information centres, particularly the central services, requires that information be systematically and periodically updated. One of the most persistent criticisms of some of the centres was that much of their information was old and out-of-date. There was some doubt in the minds of the researchers that in view of the small size of most of the centres, they would be able to maintain an effective information updating system. Consequently it was decided to examine this aspect of the operation of community information centres.

All of the centres in this study, with one exception, use some means of updating their information files. The central services made periodic use of volunteers to update their files. Usually, the information cards were dated and volunteers would check with the appropriate agency to make sure that the data was still accurate. The time spent for this updating procedure varied by centre from about every three to four months to once per year.

Several directors of the smaller centres reported that they had memberships on the mailing list of several service agencies. In addition they received clippings of notices from the local newspapers. Information gathered through contacts on the day to day "grapevine" basis were mentioned by at least five other centres, suggesting that informal procedures constitute a significant portion of new information obtained by these centres. The chief limitation of this method was the lack of adequate staff to carry out this procedure on a systematic basis.

The problem of updating information is further complicated by the fact that eleven of the fifteen directors reported experiencing some problems in gaining suitable information, particularly from some government agencies. Other directors of community information centres reported lack of co-ordination between government services as a serious obstacle to securing comprehensive and accurate information. The following comments by three directors of information centres offer some indication of the difficulties which they have encountered.

(a) "It's hard to find out the exact procedure that is required for eligibility to various programs."

(b) "There has been particular difficulty with welfare and immigration departments — no one is able to commit themselves. You seem to have to know a person at . . . in order to get information."

(c) "I've got misinformation from at least one level of government".

E. Follow-Up and Feed-Back

In view of the importance of follow-up as a means of determining the value of information or other community services, executive directors were asked if their centre had installed any systematic follow-up procedure to check whether directed or referred inquirers had received satisfactory service. Approximately half of the directors answered that no such procedure existed. The remainder altered the phrasing of the question in order to indicate that they had a procedure of sorts but not necessarily a systematic one. Some directors defined "follow-up" to include the

procedure of asking the inquirers to phone back to the centre, following referral or direction. Some centres used follow-up either to the agency or to the inquirer only for the more difficult or unusual cases. Other directors said follow-up depended upon the discretion and the time available of the staff.

Opinion was divided as to the need for follow-up procedures. Eight of the fifteen directors strongly favoured the introduction of improved follow-up procedures; the others had equally strong reservations about it. One director who had advocated increased emphasis upon follow-up said "It is necessary because you eliminate a lot of frustration that way. Often callers don't get satisfaction from our referrals but they don't tell us about it, instead they just sit and stew." Directors who were somewhat reluctant to improve their follow-up procedures point out that the confidentiality and privacy of the inquirer must be considered in any follow-up procedure. Two board members representing different centres expressed the view that "an information centre was in business to give information; but whether an inquirer got the service he wanted was none of the business of the centre". The variety of views reflected the strong opinions and even frustration experienced by many directors and board members.

The collection and tabulation of feed-back data is an issue of concern to almost all information centres included in this study. Feed-back is one of the most effective means of keeping up-to-date on the availability of community services and thereby maintaining the accuracy of the information given by their own centre. Because of the importance of feed-back data, respondents were asked what type of body should be responsible for collecting and tabulating feed-back data for their own operation. Again, as in connection with follow-up, there was no unanimity of opinion. Responses tended to fall into two general categories. First, were those respondents who put their major emphasis upon the local level and opted for their own centre as a logical choice. Twenty-two respondents chose their own centre for this responsibility. Most respondents seemed to feel that their own centre should be responsible for feed-back because it was closest to the sources of information. One director pointed out that, "We are using a double bookkeeping system right now, one set of records for outselves and one set for the provincial government."

The second group of respondents were more scattered in their responses to this question. The majority, however, felt that a provincial agency or some independent council or organization should be responsible for collecting and tabulating feed-back data. Supporters for this point of view stressed the fact that the provincial government or other large organizations had the necessary equipment including computers. Others emphasized that the collection and tabulation of feed-back data is a professional job. A third group felt that a large independent organization should collect and tabulate the feed-back data because "the local centre isn't big enough to do it". Several respondents felt that this procedure would be a means of sharing information between various centres so that each could benefit from the other's experience.

Other respondents suggested that realistically the collection and tabulation of feed-back data would have to take place at both local and provincial or national levels. The information centre would have to collect its own information in order to be aware of a situation on a day-to-day basis. In addition to that, some agency with

the capacity to handle data should be utilised as the best means of sharing information between centres. Eleven of the respondents reported that the provincial government was in the best position to handle this responsibility. Nine other respondents indicated that a national organization or council should be responsible for collecting and tabulating feed-back data.

Kahn points out that it is often necessary for a staff member to persist in follow-up by reviewing interpretations, contacting higher authorities, etc., and that this case-oriented advocacy can do a great deal in specific cases.[5] The danger in this is that the centre may then tend to "attract, generalize, favour and redefine cases to support its cause".

The role of the information centre in regard to advocacy or intervention is currently under a great deal of discussion. Respondents were not specifically asked what was meant by the term, but the responses on questions relating to follow-up and feed-back reflected a strong interest in going beyond mere information giving and referral, at least in some instances. Respondents were strongly divided on the type of intervention in which a community or neighbourhood information centre should engage. In general, the central services tended to engage in action on behalf of an inquirer especially when the inquirer could not secure the necessary service by his own efforts. Often a telephone call from a professional staff person would open doors which the inquirer could not penetrate.

The neighbourhood centres tended to become more directly involved in community action to solve a problem, e.g. engaging in organized efforts to change policies or to initiate a new service. Respondents from both groups indicated awareness of the dangers involved in forceful intercession.

When asked what group should be responsible for pressing an action when feed-back data revealed unmet community needs, sixteen of the forty-eight respondents favoured an outside community agency. The next largest group, twelve respondents, favoured the board of their own agency.

Summarizing, an almost even split was noted between respondents who favoured an improved system of follow-up and those who felt that this was not desirable. The first group stressed the need for follow-up in order to improve the services of the information centre. The second group was concerned about confidentiality and the concept that the centre had no further responsibility once information had been provided.

The same division occurred in connection with who should be responsible for collecting and tabulating feedback data. One group felt that this should be done by the local centre because it was closest to the people. The second group felt that collection and tabulation of feedback data should be the responsibility of some outside agency primarily because the local centre was too small. Some outside agency, preferably the provincial government, or some independent organization, might be more likely to possess the capacity for adequate performance in this area.

[5] Kahn, Alfred, Grossman, Lawrence **et al, Neighbourhood Information Centres:** A Study and some proposals. Columbia University School of Social Work. New York, 1966.

Intercession with community service agencies was also seen as necessary when services were not available. An outside agency or the centre's board of directors were indicated as the appropriate group to do this.

F. Location, Accessibility and Facilities

The very designation "Community Information Centre" implies that such centres exist to serve the total community and should be available or accessible to all of its members. Definitions of accessibility must also be considered; a centre may be easy to reach by telephone but hard to find for walk-in inquirers. For these reasons it was decided that the location and accessibility of community information centres should be investigated. It was also felt that the adequacy of facilities should be investigated as one important aspect of providing an information service to the community.

The centres in this study are characterized by a variety of locations and types of facilities. For example, two of the central information centres are located in storefront facilities in busy downtown sections. Two others are located in somewhat out-of-the way office quarters. However, respondents from these centres saw no particular merit in walk-in location because a central service is designed to serve a wide geographical area and handles most of its inquiries by telephone.

Neighbourhood centres on the other hand were fairly visible and easy to reach. One was located on the ground floor of a busy shopping centre, another was located in a local community recreation centre. A third group of neighbourhood centres were located in a church, a library and a school.

One centre located in a public library in Toronto has not been an overwhelming success because it is located in a relatively low-income working class ethnic area. Most of the inhabitants of this area are not accustomed to using libraries. To enter a library and to approach an information desk would mean for many residents changing an established pattern of behaviour. The director of the service explained:

> "The clientele of a library are not the same people who need our information service. Only students and the already educated are there. You won't find Italian heads of households in the library. People of low education of any type would not think of going there even if a flyer advertising our services had come in their front doors."

A neighbourhood centre located in the city of London, Ontario, though located in a working class area of the city, has, according to its director, no problem of attracting inquirers. Part of its success he feels stems from its involvement in community affairs. Another non-provincially supported neighbourhood centre located in a working class area of Toronto also appears to have little difficulty attracting inquirers. This centre also operates from a house owned by the public library but physically separated from it.

Only one of the centres, Tele-Care of St. Catharines, a befriending centre, stressed that it was necessary to be inaccessible because of its nature as a 24-hour crisis oriented service. The director emphasized that they did not want inquirers dropping in unexpectedly.

Although as indicated above, most inquirers of community information centres contact the centre by telephone, walk-ins do form a significant proportion of inquiries, especially in the neighbourhood information centres. Thus, ample room for interviewing becomes important within this context. One director made the following observation:

> "There should be a space where he can sit down and talk with the information counsellor without feeling that he is being overheard by others simultaneously seeking the same service."

The centres included in this study do not have adequate facilities for more than minimal personal interviewing. All but two of the centres had only one private room in which to conduct personal interviews. It is difficult to visualize this centre providing an adequate service to walk-ins in the absence of sufficient space for privacy in interviewing.

In general, it appears that the community information centres involved in this study are adequately accessible to their inquirers. Most inquiries of the central information centres are made by telephone and accessibility is not a serious problem. Most of the neighbourhood information centres are easily accessible to the inquirers from their local neighbourhoods. The most serious problem faced by the neighbourhood information centres is the lack of adequate space and facilities for handling inquirers who walk in from the street.

G. Relationship of Central Services to Neighbourhood Information Centres and other Community Service Agencies

The problem of a proliferation of services in the local community has been indicated earlier in this report. At the same time, particularly in the larger communities, an increasing number of local neighbourhood services are being developed. Some information centres suggest that in some situations there has been only minimal contact between the central information service and the developing neighbourhood centres. Contact and a close working relationship are essential if a meaningful network of information services is to be developed in Ontario. However, little is known of the actual degree and type of contact existing. Therefore, it was decided to investigate the situation during the course of this study. Central information services were asked about the nature of contacts they have with local neighbourhood information centres or special interest centres, for example mental health, located in their community. Neighbourhood centres were asked about the nature of their contact with the central service. All information centres were asked about their contacts with other community service agencies.

A central information centre by its very nature as a clearing house for information and a source of referrals to a wider community cannot stand in isolation from other community services. The community or central information centres in this study reported a fairly wide network of relationships with other community service agencies. These included service organizations, ethnic and social action groups, voluntary associations such as the Consumer Association of Canada, Chambers of Commerce, John Howard Societies, Social Planning Councils and various government departments.

Most of these contacts consisted of informal liaison for the exchange of information and the updating of files. In three instances, interlocking board memberships provided a further source of interchange between the information centre and other community organizations.

Six neighbourhood centres included in this study and six other neighbourhood centres not receiving provincial grants were interviewed in this connection. Both reported similar attitudes with respect to the needs of co-operation with central information centres. The neighbourhood centres tended to use central information service as a back-up whenever their own information files or resources were not adequate to handle a particular inquiry. Two centres reported that they had no contact whatsoever with the central service. The number of inquiries did not warrant developing this kind of contact.

Frequency of contact with the central information service varied by centres, with some centres having far more contact than others. However, all neighbourhood centres felt that their present level of contact with the central information service was either excellent or satisfactory. One director whose centre frequently used a central service feared that: "Any more use may cause volunteers to depend too heavily on it."

There was some indication that the neighbourhood centres looked upon the central services with a certain degree of trepidation. The general attitude of the neighbourhood centres may be summed up in the words of two respondents who stated the following: "Use, but don't amalgamate with the central services" and "Be independent but co-operative." Another neighbourhood director said: "It would be senseless to duplicate their files since it is available whenever we need it."

The attitudes of the central service directors were somewhat different. Several directors of central services indicated that the central service would usually attempt to help neighbourhood services set up their record keeping, train their volunteers and provide other types of help when needed. Other board members of central services emphasized their consultative and advisory, but not directive roles. Only one board member of a central service expressed a view which might be considered somewhat paternalistic. He spoke as follows: "We are Big Daddy. Neighbourhood centres come to **us** for advice and help."

1. Relationship with Government Agencies

Liaison between information centres and government levels such as Information Canada and the Provincial Department of Northern Affairs is also very much at the informal stage of development. In Ottawa, for example, the Community Information Centre and Information Canada's Enquiry Centre are reported, on occasion, to exchange referrals, but as yet have not developed any definite guide-lines as to which agency should be responsible for general information. Information Canada, though primarily designed to provide information on federal government agencies and programs, is attempting to answer all questions at present, usually by referral to the proper government department or other source.

A meeting was recently held at Sault Ste. Marie to discuss further co-ordination in that area between the Ontario Department of Northern Affairs, Information Canada, the local library and the Community Information Centre. Details were still being worked out at the time of our interviews. This type of co-operation, however, might form a prototype of the development of integrated information systems in the future.

2. Relationships with Libraries

Although libraries have traditionally served a valuable role as a respository of information, at least in middle class communities, there is considerable evidence that many residents of low-income and immigrant communities will not presently make use of their services for meeting informational needs. Present trends suggest that libraries are aware of this difficulty and are beginning to change their image.

Fifteen of the forty-eight community information centre respondents mentioned libraries as a source of aid and co-operation. In some communities the library had helped the information centre to get started, either by offering its professional staff to help set up a filing and indexing system, or providing materials, including directories and documents. Most centres reported that they used libraries in the day to day operation either as a reference resource or to seek information not in their own files.

In general, the data suggests that an excellent relationship existed between most community information centres and voluntary and public community service agencies. Public libraries were noted as a particularly relevant source of help and support in the establishment and operation of community information centres. Relationships between community information and neighbourhood information centres were also generally satisfactory, but characterized by a determination on the part of the neighbourhood services to maintain their autonomy and independence.

H. Publicity and Public Relations

An information centre, like any other community service is of limited usefulness unless potential users are aware of its existence. Ideally its publicity efforts should be varied so that it reaches a wider audience than merely those who are already well informed. The fact that great numbers of citizens are not well informed about community services is increasingly being documented by relevant studies. For example, the Federal Task Force Report **"To Know and Be Known"** identified several "special publics" which were felt to be very poorly informed through normal mass media publicity efforts. However, community information centres generally do not focus their efforts upon reaching special publics. Rather, they are working to establish themselves as a service to the total community rather than for some specialized sector.

In this connection Kahn feels that one of the great advantages of the Citizens Advice Bureau System in Britain is that it is a service to all social and economic groups. It presents itself to the public in a manner carefully designed to avoid any association with "welfare officers or public clinics". The report **Community Information Centres: A proposal for Canada in the 1970's.** Public Policy Concern,

Ottawa, December 1970 by Stewart and Starrs also points out that services designed to reach a certain public may often do more harm than good. For example, a service to help elderly people may indirectly emphasize the disadvantages of growing old.

With these issues in mind, community information centres were asked how do residents of the community learn about the information centre and what could be done to help residents become more aware of their existence. Centres were also asked whether or not they periodically published directories of community services.

In general, the results indicate that publicity efforts were channeled in many directions. Pamphlets, bulletins and flyers were distributed by some centres in various public and voluntary community agencies. A few centres made use of the local Welcome Wagon. Media coverage including radio, cable TV or newspapers was mentioned by over half of all of the respondents representing community information centres. Although frequency and intensity of publicity efforts were not specifically investigated, there were indications from respondents that present publicity efforts were generally sporadic and not very intensive. Most felt that considerably more could be done to help residents become aware of the services provided by their centre.

With the exception of centres located in the ethnic areas, very few attempts were made by information centres to reach special publics. In general, when these attempts were made, the centre advertised only in the language of the predominant ethnic group in their area. Even here, one director was apologetic because she felt other language groups in the neighbourhood were being overlooked because of this focus upon the language of the predominant group.

In investigating the effects of public relations efforts, it was felt essential to ask inquirers how they had learned of the existence of the community information centre. The largest single group of respondents, 31 of 103, reported that they learned of the service through friends or relatives.

TABLE VIII

SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF INFORMATION CENTRES

Sources	Number	Per Cent
Friends and Relatives	31	30.1
Newspaper Publicity	23	22.3
Radio and Television	6	5.8
Churches and Clubs	6	5.8
Social Service Agencies	14	13.6
Telephone Book	12	11.8
Other	11	10.6
TOTAL	103	100.0

Twenty-three respondents had learned of the existence of the centre through newspaper publicity. Radio and television were of limited effectiveness in helping inquirers learn of the existence of community information centres.

Under the category "Other" a variety of sources were mentioned by one or more inquirers. Two respondents had heard of the community information centre through their doctor, three others had heard of the centre from a government office and another from the telephone operator. Brochures distributed in an apartment building were indicated as a source of information about the community information centre by three respondents.

Improving Public Relations Activities

Although no specific question was asked about what centres could do to improve their public relations, many respondents indicated that much more could be done to help residents become aware of the services provided by their centre. Suggestions ranged from developing multi-language notices, emergency listings in the telephone book and designing a special emblem identifying community information centres. A few centres, however, were quite reluctant about increased publicity for fear of a sudden rush of calls which they felt would overstrain their capacity to respond adequately.

In summary it appears that there was no predominant method of publicity or public relations employed by most of the community information centres included in this study. Most directors or agencies indicated that publicity and public relations efforts were sporadic and not very intensive. Except for a few neighbourhood information centres located in ethnic areas, very little attempt was made to reach members of the immigrant population.

The largest number of inquirers reported that they learned of the community information centre through friends and relatives. Inquirers reported that with the exception of newspaper publicity, the mass media was of very limited effectiveness in this area.

I. Staffing Community Information Centres

It was generally agreed that the staffing of a community information centre or any other helping agency is of crucial importance in determining the quality of its services to the community. Any evaluation of the community information centres then must ascertain the views of directors and other informed persons of the type and quality of staff services available to the centre. Questions were asked of directors about the type of staff available including volunteers and professionals, the role of volunteers in their program, whether or not multilingual staff was available, and whether or not there were orientation and in-service training programs for both volunteer and professional staff.

The centres studied tended to reflect one of three types of staff structure:

a) Paid staff only
b) Paid staff plus volunteer staff
c) Volunteer staff only.

Paid staff was either on the payroll of the information centre or in a few instances sent to the centre from another agency.

1. Paid or Professional Staff

Only two centres, Sault Ste. Marie and Faith United Church Information Centre, located in Toronto, reported operating exclusively with paid staff. The remaining centres operated either with a mixture of paid and volunteer staff or with volunteers alone.

All of the central services use paid staff plus volunteers in various capacities. The number of paid staff in the various information centres ranged from one to nine with an average of approximately two staff persons per centre. With the exception of the Community Information Centre, in Toronto, the small size of the staffs of community information centres must be kept in mind when considering other aspects of the centres' program, including updating of information or procedures for follow-up and feed-back.

2. Qualifications of Professional or Full-time Staff

The background of staff members in community information centres was extremely varied. Although some staff persons were educated and qualified in psychology, social welfare or other fields, none of the staff members had specific professional or academic training in the art of providing information. At the present time it appears that practical experience, rather than academic training, is considered the most useful qualification for paid information counsellors.

3. Orientation of Paid Staff

Almost all centres using paid staff had some program or procedure to keep their staff well informed of new developments. Procedures included periodic staff meetings, occasional visits from professionals from other community services agencies and the use of notices and brochures posted on the staff bulletin board. One-third of the centres relied upon "on the job" communications between staff members to learn about new developments in the field.

With one exception, staff members of all centres had sources of professional advice to turn to when they encountered a problem outside of their competence or ability to handle. In many instances board members who possessed the required knowledge were the source of advice. In other instances, personal contact with social workers, lawyers, and other professionals provided the necessary answer. A few centres had developed a professional consultant or advisory committee as a support to its paid staff.

With one exception, the directors of all community information centres reported that a paid staff co-ordinator is needed either on a full-time or part-time basis for their centre. All agreed that only a paid staff person on a regular basis could provide continuity, assume overall responsibility for the centre, handle administrative duties, and recruit, train and supervise volunteers. Two directors also expressed the view that "You can ask and depend upon a paid person to do more".

4. Use of Volunteers

Thirteen of the fifteen centres included in this study used volunteers in some capacity in the operation of their program. Six of the centres operated their program exclusively by the use of volunteers. One of the primary arguments in favour of the use of volunteers is that it is less costly. It is usually agreed that using volunteers can considerably reduce the expense of operating an information centre. In the case of neighbourhood centres particularly, the effective use of volunteers can make a difference between survivial and the termination of the operation.

A second argument put forward by several board members concerns the human element. It was suggested that paid staff may all too easily come to regard inquirers in a routine and impersonal manner. Volunteers, it was suggested, by bringing a different background into the picture, may provide the imaginative approach and personal empathy so necessary to help many inquirers. In the words of one director: "They are vital to keep the information centres from becoming bureaucracy piled upon bureaucracy."

The job functions assigned to volunteers however, vary considerably by centre. In the central services in the larger urban areas, volunteers tended to be used primarily for specialized purposes such as clerical services and the updating of data. In most central services volunteers were not involved in direct contact with inquirers. In contrast, volunteers in the neighbourhood centres, and centres located in smaller towns, performed a much broader set of functions. For example, they were in direct contact with inquirers and performed a number of service functions including letter writing, interpretation and community relations. Two central services which used volunteers in supporting capacities reported that they are involved in analysing data and contacting other community agencies with regard to updating information.

The use of volunteers, however, is not a cure-all and can pose as many problems as it solves. More than half the centres using volunteers reported difficulties either in recruiting or in retaining their services for considerable periods of time. This problem was reported by all types of information centres, including neighbourhood information centres.

5. Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

The six neighbourhood centres which operate exclusively on the basis of volunteer staff, reported some difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Boredom was a reason commonly given to explain a high rate of turnover. Often a centre was not busy when a volunteer was on duty, for example, during the late evening hours. It was also reported that the location of an information centre may also determine whether or not it has difficulties in recruiting or retaining volunteers. Some other studies have suggested that volunteers are more difficult to obtain in low income than in middle income areas. Directors of two centres located in low income areas reported difficulty in recruiting because the community was hostile or because people did not want to give their time and energy without remuneration. Comments from five of the non-provincially supported centres included in this study are very

similar. Typical comments are as follows:

> "We can't keep volunteers because so often they return to school or get paid employment instead — Our rate of turnover is high."

Another comment:

> "Because it is voluntary help, it is difficult, if not impossible, to impose a regular schedule of attendance. People just are not available on a regular schedule."

6. Orientation and Training of Volunteers

The directors of eight of the thirteen centres using volunteers reported that an orientation program of some kind is available for new volunteers. Generally the program may be described as an apprenticeship under the guidance of the executive director. It may involve a tour of the centre, provision of reading material, discussions as to the type of work expected and meetings with service agency representatives. One centre, oriented toward crisis intervention rather than information, operated the most extensive and rigorous training program reported in this study. It "[welcome]s volunteers" and provided "a comfortable [fee]ling of belonging" during the training program in the use of community resources and telephone techniques, including the handling of different inquiry attitudes on the telephone. In addition, volunteers had to participate in a weekend sensitivity training program plus a final observation session with the executive director of the centre.

Most directors reported that they would prefer to keep volunteer training at the local level. Respondents preferred that training should be done by their own centre alone or through co-operation with a local community college. The general feeling was that volunteers should be trained for the specific community in which they lived. Training was seen to be of limited value unless the program reflected local needs.

In summary, only two of the fifteen community information centres in this study are staffed entirely by paid staff. Six centres are staffed entirely by volunteers. The remaining centres are staffed by a combination of paid and volunteer staff. Paid staff tends to be very small, varying from one to a high of nine, but with an average of approximately two per centre.

Directors of central information centres located in the larger urban areas, tend to rely heavily upon paid staff for contact with inquirers and other community agencies. Volunteers tend to be used in a support capacity. On the other hand, the neighbourhood information centres make much broader use of their volunteer staff. Volunteers are required to contact inquirers, to contact the general public and to perform community relations functions.

Although quite different in conception and operation, directors of all agencies indicated that orientation and training programs are available to both volunteer and paid staff. In general it was felt that these programs should be specifically focused upon improving knowledge and understanding of local needs and resources.

F. Management Structure

The control and management of community institutions and organizations is becoming increasingly the subject of analysis and criticism in many areas of community life. Attention has been called to this matter because many community agencies, particularly in the voluntary sector, have been largely controlled by individuals of relatively high social and economic status. Increasingly demands are being heard that community agencies should be managed and controlled by representatives of the local community in which they operate. As one of its desirable conditions for the allocation of funds, the Provincial Government suggested that the board of directors should be widely representative of a local community.

In order to examine this situation a number of questions were asked about the structure, composition and knowledgeability of members of the boards of directors of community information centres.

As indicated by Table IX, all but one of the central services are set up with their own boards of directors. The remaining central service in Ottawa is operated under the umbrella of the Social Planning Council but has its separate management committee.

TABLE IX

MANAGEMENT AND AUSPICES

Independent Board of Directors	Responsible to Parent Body
Hamilton	Ottawa
London	St. Catharines (includes Tele-Care and Community Information Service)
Toronto (Central)	Orillia
Toronto — Thorncliffe Pk.	Sault Ste. Marie
Brockville	Toronto (Lawrence Heights)

Other — The Earlscourt Area Project does not fit into either of the above categories.

Tele-Care and the Community Information Service of St. Catharines operate under a management committee which has overall responsibility but otherwise the centres remain as separate operations. The Earlscourt Area Project in Toronto is unique in that funds are held by a co-ordinating committee for the purpose of hiring a co-ordinator and taking other necessary measures to link together the area information centres. The funds are not expended in the operation of the individual centres.

Board Composition

Many observers of the voluntary service sector, particularly have stressed the importance of the background and interests of members of boards of directors. In addition to examining the composition of boards of directors, it was also considered important to determine if there was a significant relationship between centres which

had independent boards of directors and those which were controlled by a larger body.

It was found that although considerable variation existed, most boards of directors were fairly representative of their community. The term "representative", however, is itself difficult to define satisfactorarily. For example, one director who was dissatisfied with her board, indicated that she had "an ideal board from the point of view of its representativeness of the community". Included among its membership were a public housing tenant, a labour representative, a retired person, a librarian, a university professor and other professionals. However, this apparently representative board lacked involvement in the centre's activity because of "prior commitments". Several respondents suggested that individuals from a specific sector of the community do not necessarily reflect or advocate the needs of that sector and may become apathetic and unconcerned with the problems and challenge of guiding an innovative information centre.

In addition to probing the effects of present board structure and function, respondents were asked what they considered to be an ideal type of board composition. As indicated in Table X, which allowed for more than one choice by each respondent, the responses indicated that the largest number supported the concept of broad community representation as the ideal board composition.

TABLE X

IDEAL BOARD COMPOSITION AS SUGGESTED BY DIRECTORS AND BOARD MEMBERS

Type of Representation	Number of Times Mentioned
1) Broad community	38
2) Government	12
3) Professions and agencies	22
4) Business	14
5) Media	5
6) Funding bodies	2
7) Neighbourhood areas/ethnic community	7
Number = 100 TOTAL	100

The second largest number of responses were those reflecting the importance of professional and agency representation on boards of directors. Several respondents, however, specifically pointed out that they did not want their boards to be dominated by agency or professional representation. Representation from funding bodies and from the local neighbourhood was indicated as important by only a few of the respondents. Similarly, government representation on boards of directors was indicated as important by only 12 per cent of the responses.

Findings on the possible relationship between board composition and the sponsorship of the community information centre was inconclusive and no

consistent pattern emerged. The data suggests that the commitment and interest of board members may be a more significant variable than community representation at this period in the development of community information centres.

K. Funding and Financial Support for Community Information Centres

The importance of adequate funding for community information centres is recognized by the board of directors and staffs of all centres. This importance is highlighted by the decision of the Provincial Government to provide some financial support to the centres involved in this study. Because of the importance of financial resources in the operation of a community information centre, inquiries were made regarding the amount of financial support available and opinion about who should be responsible for providing what degree of support in the future.

In view of the fact that most of the centres were new, many of them having begun operation in 1970 and even in 1971, it was very difficult to arrive at a precise annual budget for each of the individual centres. Some grants were given for less than a full year of operation. In other instances, grants were given for the entire year. It should also be kept in mind that none of the centres are operated entirely on the basis of grants from the Provincial Government. All centres have some other source of income or free rent or other types of support which can be translated into financial terms.

Budgets ranged from a low of $1,000 to a high of more than $86,000. Only three centres in the study, all central information centres in larger areas, reported budgets in excess of $20,000.

Financial support for the centres came from all levels of government and from the voluntary sector. Four projects are supported by the federal government. Four projects are also supported by local municipal governments. The voluntary sector usually represented by the United Appeal, provides financial support to eight of the fifteen centres included in the study. The Provincial Government provides financial support to all of the centres, varying from a low of $500 for one neighbourhood service to a high of $16,000 for one centre located in a large, urban area.

1. Adequacy of Financial Support

Not surprisingly, twenty-seven of the forty-eight respondents said that their budget was inadequate. A further eight respondents felt that their budget although adequate for present day purposes could not hope to meet future needs. On the other hand, twelve respondents put it that their budgets are presently adequate. In some instances, the adequacy of present budgets is related to the fact that budgets are kept low through sharing facilities with a sponsor, e.g. a local United Appeal, and sharing staff with a parent agency.

Centres interviewed during the course of the study but not receiving provincial grants also expressed the same complaints about the inadequacy of their budgets. Only three of the ten non-provincially supported centres interviewed reported that their budgets were adequate.

Since budgeting problems were obviously a major source of concern to many of the centres, respondents were asked what specific difficulties had been created by a lack of funds. Staffing problems were mentioned most often and related to an inability to advertise or expand the program or hours for operation. Four respondents said that their future funding was so uncertain that they could not even be sure that their centre could continue to operate. Five additional respondents regretted that they could not do further work in the community such as aiding in the establishment of neighbourhood centres.

2. Desirable Financial Support

Since many respondents felt their budgets were inadequate, it is of interest to know their views on what was felt to be needed in order to operate an adequate program in their centres. Directors were asked to indicate budget needs to operate at a minimal, adequate and optimal levels of service.

TABLE XI

DESIRABLE FINANCIAL SUPPORT AT THREE LEVELS OF OPERATION

	Minimal Range	Adequate Range	Optimum Range
Central Services	$18,000–$32,000	$25,000–$50,000	$70,000 and up
Neighbourhood Services	$ 1,000–$15,000	$ 3,600–$30,000	$ 7,500–$50,000
Smaller Centres	$ 1,200–$ 3,000	$ 1,800–$ 8,000	$15,000

Number = 10

The above table represents the opinions of ten directors. Of the remaining five, four felt that their present budget was fairly adequate (two represented smaller centres, one a neighbourhood centre, and one a large metropolitan centre). The remaining director specified no definite sums, asking only enough "to pay the salary of one full-time person".

As indicated above, the central services tended to report the highest projection of budgetary needs in all three categories. This reflects the fact that they already have a paid staff and greater overhead to begin with. In the optimal range, only one central service director ventured to give a concrete estimate; the others felt that the optimal level of functioning was still too far in the future for them to make any such projections.

The funds suggested by neighbourhood centres for the three levels of operation showed a surprising range. Two of the neighbourhood centres had a fairly modest

requirement; from $1,000 at the lowest to $15,000 at the highest level. The remaining centres gave extremely high estimates of financial needs, varying from $15,000 at the minimal to $50,000 at the optimal level. Their budget was based on developing a core of paid staff, a development which could change their character as a volunteer operated neighbourhood-based centre.

When questioned about estimated budgetary needs for the next five years, most of the directors were unable to make any firm statements or projections beyond one to two years. Most said that any budgetary projections would depend on the community's continuing acceptance of the information centre. Budget projections were essentially the same as estimated budgetary needs, ranging through the minimal, adequate and optimum levels.

3. Uses of Additional Funds

When asked what use would be made of additional funds if available, the replies of the forty-eight respondents indicated that the question of staffing was uppermost in the minds of most. Thrity of the forty-eight respondents indicated the need for some type of additional staff, including full-time director, secretarial help, professional staff, community liaison worker and paid co-ordinator. Paying for office supplies and facilities and more advertising and publicity followed the need for increased staff as primary concerns of most respondents.

4. Criteria for Funding Eligibility

Although opinions were quite mixed in regard to standards of criteria for funding eligibility, forty-six of the forty-eight respondents replied that some criteria were necessary. Twelve respondents said that since public money was being spent, it had to be allocated upon the basis of some kind of accountability. Others indicated that standards were necessary to protect the public and to ensure accurate information to clients. As one respondent suggested: "There are so many different types of organizations giving information that without standards the local pool hall could qualify as an information centre."

The types of standards which a centre should meet in order to become eligible, may be summarized as follows:

a) an organization must prove need for an information centre before it could receive funds.

b) it must demonstrate community support, e.g. through a representative board of directors.

c) some developed formal structure and an administrative procedure must be specified in order to prove the centres' intention to operate effectively.

d) a good location easily accessible to inquirers should be required.

e) assurances should be required that accurate information would be given to inquirers.

f) concern was voiced that the inquirer's sense of confidentiality must be protected.

Finally, 22 of the 48 respondents felt that the provision of qualified, trained staff whether volunteer or paid, was essential in any set of criteria which might be developed.

Additional considerations included the attitude of 25 of the respondents who felt that any standards which were set up should be flexibly applied with allowances made for location, circumstances and community conditions. Other respondents pointed out that the element of time should be included in any criteria which might be set up. For example, it was felt that the initial granting of funds to a centre might have to be done subjectively; after a time span of say approximately one year, the centre would have to justify its existence in order to get additional funds.

Attitudes towards sources of funds for community information centres.

Most of the information centre directors included in this study have approached and received funds from both public and voluntary sources. Many of the centres are supported in part by one or more levels of government and the voluntary sector. At the moment there is no consistent pattern of financial support. Each individual centre must attempt to find funds from whatever source it can. This leads to a fragmentation of effort and a great deal of wasted time and energy in the search for financial support. Respondents were asked in the ideal situation, who did they feel should be responsible for funding community information centres. Respondents were asked to check as many items as they wished.

TABLE XII

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNDING COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRES

Source:	Number of Responses	Per Cent
1) federal government	41	85.4
2) provincial government	41	85.4
3) municipal government	38	79.2
4) private sector	29	60.4

Number = 48

The Table reflects the fact that most respondents did not select any one method of financing community information centres. For example, 41 of the 48 respondents favoured both the federal and provincial governments. It is clear then that most respondents favoured multiple funding. However, two respondents suggested that the private sector alone should be responsible for funding community information centres on the grounds that this would give a self-sufficiency not possible with government funding.

Many of the respondents justified their choices on two grounds. First, as one director stated: "Most of our requests seem to deal with some government program at the federal or provincial level." Second, approximately 20 per cent of all respondents wanted multiple funding because it would yield greater autonomy and freedom

for their operation. As one director put it: "Information is a powerful tool in our society and he who pays the piper calls the tune."

The private sector as shown by the table was the least favoured of funding sources. Six respondents discussing their attitudes towards the private sector felt that "it was just too difficult to get money from private voluntary sources".

Although respondents were questioned as to what proportion did they feel the various levels of government and the voluntary sector should pay in multiple funding arrangements, the results were inconclusive and no pattern emerged.

Accountability

The final aspect of financial support relates to the question of accountability. Both financial and program accountability are assumed to be important aspects of the operation of any community organization whether public or voluntary. Board members and directors of community information centres, therefore, were questioned about their attitudes towards the appropriate accountability of community information centres at both the program and financial levels.

It was found that the larger number, 29 of the 66 responses or 43.9 per cent, indicated that accountability should be to funding bodies.

TABLE XIII

SOURCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability to:		Number of Responses	Per Cent
community or users of service		15	22.7
funding bodies		29	43.9
own board		19	28.9
co-ordinator or executive of centre		3	4.5
Number = 66	TOTAL	66	100.0

However, it was also found that 34 responses of 51.6 per cent of the total number dicated that accountability should be at the local level, either to the community at large or to the board of directors of the community information centre. Feedback from the community, general meetings, the nature of board representation and ultimately the use of the community information centre were seen as yardsticks indicating whether or not the community information centre was operating in response to community needs.

In summary the findings of this study indicate that:

(1) directors of community information centres have sought and received supporting grants both from government and voluntary sources. All levels of government have contributed funds to the support of community information

centres. Most support from the voluntary sector has come from United Appeals.

(2) the financial support of community information centres is generally inadequate

(3) additional funds if available, would be used by directors for (a) increasing the size of the staff (b) increasing the adequacy of supplies and (c) increasing the amount of advertising and public relations.

(4) directors of community information centres would not be happy with financial support from any one source; multiple financing patters are preferred, largely because this would reduce their financial dependency on any one source.

(5) directors of community information centres indicate that accountability is important but should be primarily to first, the funding bodies, second to their own board and third, to the community.

L. Perceptions of Government Role

The interest of the Government of Ontario is studying and in evaluating the development of community information centres, *was outlined in the introductory chapter* of this report. The government has provided direct evidence of its interest by providing supporting grants to the community information centres included in this study. At present a consultant from the Community Development Branch provides consultation and sits as an ex-officio member on the boards of directors of the participating community information centres. Two questions were asked respondents in order to ascertain their opinions of a desirable role for government in the development of a voluntary network of community information centres in Ontario.

The first question asked if the respondent felt that the government had a role in acting as a consultant to neighbourhood or community information centres. The second question asked what level of government would be most appropriate for playing that role, federal, provincial or municipal.

A total of 38 of the 48 respondents representing community information centres felt that the government should play a role in this development. Eight respondents felt that the government should not. Two respondents did not reply to the question. Of the 38 respondents who felt that the government should play a role in the development of community information centres, 13 felt that the government "should give advice or help with problems". An additional 13 respondents felt that government should "facilitate exchange of information between different centres". Other responses were "help other organizations get started" and "the funding role".

The respondents who felt that the government should not play a consultative role indicated either that they did not see a need, or that the government would not be sufficiently knowledgeable about local problems. For example, in an ethnic area some respondents felt, "a consultant would need some understanding of the cultural background of the clients using the centre".

Several of the respondents who favoured governmental consultation indicated that this should be done with certain conditions in mind. One group of five respondents felt that the local centres must initiate any request for assistance. One respondent stated: "You have to sell the program to them first – they are pretty independent; if they want help they will ask for it."

Four respondents felt that a consultation role by government would be helpful to the central information centres, but not to the neighbourhood information centres.

When asked what level of government would be most appropriate for a consultation role, 23 of the 48 respondents favoured the Provincial Government. The remaining replies were scattered with several respondents suggesting a combination of governmental levels. Again the respondents who favoured the provincial role did so for a variety of reasons. Five for example, suggested that the Province had already shown support and, therefore, was logically the governmental body to provide a consultation role. Other respondents felt that geographically the province would be a manageable area to cover. Several other respondents favoured the Government of Ontario because it dealt with people at a less remote level than the federal government.

In summary, 38 respondents indicated that they favoured a consultative role for government in the operation of community information centres. Of these 38 respondents, 23 felt that the Provincial Government should play this role. The remaining responses were scattered with a few indicating that more than one level of government should play this role.

M. Perceptions of Future Plans

Up to this point the report has been concerned primarily with the present situation of information centres involved in this study. As indicated earlier in this report, many of the centres have only been in operation for a few months; almost all are in the process of defining their aims, scope of operation and their relationship to the community. It was assumed to be important, however, to enquire of respondents if they had thought of or formulated plans for the future development of their centres. The question was open-ended. Several respondents indicated one or more desirable areas of expansion.

Expansion of the service was foremost in the minds of the largest number of respondents. Sixteen respondents indicated that they would like to expand their service by adding more staff either paid or volunteer for information and referral or for community liason work. An additional 14 respondents indicated that further community involvement was their most serious concern. Other respondents also indicated that they would like to expand their public relations programs, open the centre longer hours, or engage in more follow-up work.

The focus upon increased community involvement was expressed by representatives of all of the various types of centres. Neighbourhood centres, however, tended to emphasize service elements including organizing car pools, senior citizens projects and the development of youth centres. Some neighbourhood information centres appear, at least in some instances, to be thinking of moving toward becoming essentially neighbourhood service centres.

The four central information centres, all located in larger urban areas, expressed the desire to initiate outreach posts in shopping centres or plans to help neighbourhood information centres develop a network related to the central service. At least two directors of central services favoured decentralization of their service, as a check against what they considered to be "over-bureaucratization" of their own centres.

Five of the respondents also spoke of the need to protect their independence by incorporating themselves or setting up their own boards of directors. All of these respondents were either board members or directors of centres which are still controlled by a parent body.

Not all centres however, have the time or energy to spare for thinking of future plans and developments. Five respondents representing a neighbourhood and small town centre, felt that their program was merely trying to stay alive. In the words of one director: "Finances dominate us, and as long as you are dealing with survival you can't plan."

N. Satisfaction with Community Information Services

While such variables as goals, use of staff, financial support, updating procedures, management structures and accountability are important, the most important variable is that of community and inquirer satisfaction with the service. In this connection inquirers were asked, "to what extent were you satisfied with the information provided by the centre"? The responses to this question are indicated in table XIV.

TABLE XIV

INQUIRY SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRES

Level of Satisfaction	Number of Inquirers	Per Cent
Very satisfied	67	63.2
Generally satisfied	30	28.3
Dissatisfied	6	5.7
Very Dissatisfied	3	2.8
TOTAL	106	100.0

It is indicated that 97 of the 106 respondents of 91.5 per cent of the total were either very satisfied or satisfied with the services of the community information centres. This question was followed up by asking: "What did you particularly like or dislike about the centre?" Again respondents expressed general satisfaction with the service of the community information centres. Satisfaction was generally expressed by such terms as:

a) pleasant and polite attitudes of the staff were very helpful (32 respondents)

b) helpful attitudes (29 respondents)

c) "information was immediately available" (11 respondents)

Although only a few respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the community information services included in this study, these covered a fairly wide area of concern. The following are representative of some of the comments of individual respondents:

a) "hours of business were too short"
b) "centre uncooperative, no information provided"
c) "did not seem to want to help and files a bit out of date"

Attitudes of Community Service Agency Representatives

In spite of some criticism, most community service agency respondents emphasized the positive effects of the activities of the community information centre on their own programs. Nine of the thirty-six respondents indicated that their own agency had fewer problems with inappropriate requests.

In addition the respondents representing community agencies agreed that the information centre was fulfilling other important community needs. Twenty-two respondents mentioned the integration and co-ordination of information of various aspects of the community as a major contribution of information centres. Other respondents emphasized the importance of accurate referral to the appropriate agency. A typical comment is as follows: "The information centre is a contact for people who don't know where to turn to get information or to begin to sort out a problem".

In summary it is noted that in spite of the very brief period of operation of many of the community information centres, inquirers and representatives of community service agencies expressed general satisfaction with their performance. An overwhelming number of respondents indicated that (1) the community information centres were providing a much needed service and (2) that they were not duplicating the services of other community agencies. Criticisms were related primarily to such factors as limited hours of operation, inadequate information and out-dated files.

CHAPTER 3

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents a point by point summary of the major findings of Chapter 2.

1. In relation to purposes and goals, a high degree of consensus was reported by respondents representing community information centres. These were:
   a) Information giving
   b) Direction and referral
   c) Advice and counselling

2. Only one half of the community service agency representatives, however, held-view their perception of information giving as a major role of community information centres. One third of these respondents referred to direction and referral, and one mentioned advice and counselling as major goals which they perceived for community information centres.

3. With respect to volume and types of service provided by eight community information centres, a total of 8,238 inquiries were served during the month of June, 1971. A total of 80.3 per cent of these inquiries were by telephone and only 12.7 per cent were by office or face to face interviews. The remaining inquiries were served by an answering service or by correspondence.

4. The services required by inquirers were varied in nature, but focused largely upon:
   a) Financial problems
   b) Health problems, both mental and physical
   c) Recreation and vacation needs
   d) Problems of housing and accommodation
   e) Child welfare concerns

5. Although about one quarter of all inquiries were handled by the staff of the centre, the remaining three quarters were directed or referred to a variety of agencies and organizations for service. Government programs, including Municipal Welfare, Recreation and Education agencies, Health Agencies and Organizations and other government programmes, including Legal Aid programmes of the Department of Labour and Ontario Housing Corporation, were the major recipients of these referrals.

6. With the exception of one centre, all community information centres included in this study, reported some form of information updating. Procedures tended to be sporadic and varied from approximately every four months to once per year. Methods of updating information included newspaper clippings, attendance at meetings, being placed on mailing lists of organizations, and informal contacts in the community.

7. None of the community information centres involved in this study engaged

(i) A systematic follow-up to check whether all inquirers actually received their required service. Some centres engaged in follow-up only with the more difficult cases. Others did not engage in follow-up because of concern about protecting the confidentiality of their relationship with inquirers.

Collecting and tabulating feedback data on community services and their own operations was a matter of considerable concern to all of the centres. All respondents felt that this was essential but different on who should do it. Twenty-two respondents favoured their own centre, eleven a provincial government agency and nine an independent organization.

5 All respondents agreed that some form of intervention on behalf of a client who could not get a necessary service was required, but different as to how this could be done. An awareness of the dangers of intervention by a community information centre was recognized by most respondents. Twenty-eight of the forty-eight respondents representing community information centres indicated that intervention on behalf of a client, or to improve a community service, should be done either by a voluntary agency in the community or by the board of directors of the local information centre.

6 Community information centres are characterized by a variety of types of facilities and locations. In general, respondents representing central services felt that it was unnecessary to be highly visible or easily accessible.

Neighbourhood information centres however, tended to value high visibility and accessibility. One centre, a befriending centre, because of the nature of its service, deemphasized easy accessibility.

(i) All centres recognized the value of good publicity and public relations, but few were able to engage in a continuous or systematic program of informing the community of their services. Enquiry centres, however, were reasonably visible on an informal basis with several community service agencies. These included public libraries, voluntary agencies and numerous government agencies and departments.

The largest number of inquiries, however, reported that the bulk source of the assistance of the centre through friends and relatives. The second largest number source of the centre through newspaper publicity.

(ii) Three types of staff structure were found:
a) Professional staff only,
b) Paid staff plus volunteer staff
c) Volunteer staff only.

Only two centres used paid staff and no centre used volunteer staff exclusively.

Job assignments varied, but in general, central services relied primarily upon paid staff for direct contact with inquirers. Neighbourhood centres tended to use volunteers for this purpose.

Most centres have initiated some type of orientation or in-service training program for paid or volunteer staff. These programs are usually sporadic and informal. With one exception, all respondents reported satisfaction with the use of volunteer staff.

13. Although the management structure of community information services varied considerably, two general types could be discerned. First, the centre was governed by an independent board of directors. Secondly, the centre was governed by a committee responsible to another parent body, for example, a community welfare or social planning council.

Although it is difficult to define the term "representativeness" most respondents reported that their boards were composed of a fairly widely representative group of citizens.

No significant difference was found in the fulfillments of those centres governed by "representative boards" and those composed of a narrower section of the community.

14. With few exceptions, all centres were financed, in varying degrees, by more than one source of funds. All levels of government and the voluntary sector were involved in the financing of community information centres.

Twenty-seven of forty-eight respondents felt that their budgets were adequate. Eight others felt that their budgets were only adequate for the present level of operation.

All centres projected needs for additional funds in the future. These funds would be used primarily for:

a) Additional staff
b) Office supplies and facilities
c) Advertising and publicity

The provincial and federal governments were equally favoured as sources of funds. For a variety of reasons, however, the great majority of respondents indicated multiple funding as the desirable and appropriate method of financing community information centres.

15. Forty-eight of the forty-eight respondents felt that government should have a consultative role in the operation of community information services. Eight other respondents did not agree with this view.

Twenty-six of the forty-eight respondents felt that this role should be "to give advice and help with problems" and "to foster exchange of information". The largest single group, twenty-three of the forty-eight respondents, indicated that they felt the Government of Ontario should provide this service.

16. Although many centres had been in operation for less than two years, most had plans in mind for future growth and development. Sixteen of the forty-eight representatives reported plans for expansion of the services of their centre. An additional fourteen respondents wanted their centre to be

more involved with the community.

Central services emphasized the need for establishing "Outreach Posts" in shopping centres, and helping develop new neighbourhood information centres.

Neighbourhood information centres emphasized the need for organizing service projects, including car pools for senior citizens, youth centres, etc.

Five centres reported no interest in planning for the future because of their difficult struggle to stay alive and to continue operation.

16. Ninety-seven of one hundred and six inquirers reported satisfaction with the services they received from community information centres involved in this study. Twenty-two of thirty-six representatives of community service agencies, reported varying degrees of satisfaction with the services of the community information centres in their area.

Areas of dissatisfaction included:

a) Limited hours of operation of some centres
b) Unhelpful attitudes of some staff
c) Out of date information.

17. The difficulty of obtaining accurate and appropriate information on behalf of their inquirers was mentioned by several respondents. This problem encountered in both public and voluntary agencies, resulted in considerable frustration and anger by some staff members of community information centres.

18. Aside from centres located in ethnic areas, most of the community information centres involved in this study made very little systematic effort to reach the immigrant population in their general community. It was reported that most publicity efforts, including leaflets, pamphlets and brochures were printed in the English language. Very few community information centres reported employing interpreters and others who understood the language and culture of the various ethnic groups residing in their general community.

19. In some communities, libraries are beginning to play an important role in the development of community information centres. Community information centres are beginning to recognize the importance of libraries in the processing, classification, storage and retrieval of information.

CHAPTER IV

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Expansion of Consultation Role

Most respondents expressed a strong feeling that government, aside from providing funds, does have an important consultative role to play in the development of community information centres. When asked to specify the nature of this support, two thirds of the respondents suggested that the proper government role should be that of consultation including advice and assistance on operational problems. In addition it was suggested that government consultants could facilitate the exchange of information between various centres in the province.

Support and consultation are needed in such areas as development of information resource systems, development or orientation and training programs, improving follow-up and feed-back operations and the effective recruitment and utilization of volunteer staff. At the moment it appears that there is no institution or organization in local communities which can provide these services. The majority of respondents in this study favoured the assumption of this role by the Provincial Government.

1) It is recommended that the Provincial Government continue and expand its consultation services to community information centres in Ontario. The service should, as at present, continue to respect and support the essential voluntary nature of the centres.

2) In order to carry out this expanded role effectively it is recommended that in addition to a director, a staff of three information counsellors and two supporting clerical staff be employed during this fiscal year.

B. Community Information Branch Proposal

The scope of consultation and support recommended above will require that the professional and clerical staff give full time and attention to the needs of neighbourhood and community information centre development in Ontario. It will often require staff who will have the time and ability to develop and continue explorations and negotiations with other groups in the community interested in information service. This will include continuous consultations with libraries, Information Canada, various voluntary agencies, (e.g. Consumers Association of Canada) and other Provincial Government departments interested in the provision of information.

3) It is recommended that a separate community information branch be set up within the division of community services and that this branch be given responsibility for the promotion and support of community and neighbourhood information service development in Ontario. It is estimated that this branch would cost an additional sum of approximately $80,000 to $90,000 for the first year. Additional staff and resources would probably be needed depending upon the future development of information services in Ontario.

C. Provincial Conference Proposed

In addition to the establishment of government programs, it is also necessary t stimulate and encourage the further development of community efforts. Althoug the desirability of sharing and consultation between various groups in the provinc was recognized by our respondents, there seemed to be no practical way to achiev this result.

An immediate and much needed step which could be taken by the Provincia Government would be to sponsor a provincial conference of neighbourhood an community information centres to share experiences, to learn from each other, an to obtain some perspective on the total picture of information developments i Ontario and in Canada. A major item on the agenda of such a conference might b the desirability and feasibility of establishing an Ontario association of neighbour hood and community information centres.

4) It is recommended that the Provincial Government consider sponsoring two-day provincial conference of neighbourhood and community informa tion centres in Ontario. Executive directors and at least one member of th board of each centre could be invited to attend this gathering. This confer ence should be held immediately, perhaps in October or November of 1971.

It is further recommended that a committee of five to seven people represen ting neighbourhood and community information centres from across Ontari be invited to constitute the Planning Committee for this conference.

D. Need for Increased Financial Support

The lack of adequate financial support is a basic of many of the other problem confronting information centres in Ontario. Almost without exception the centre lack adequate staff for follow-up, for maintaining and updating resource files, an for bringing to the attention of the community the unmet needs discovered durin the process of the day-to-day operation. For the most part, the centres also lac adequate space and facilities. This is a particularly serious problem in the case of thos neighbourhood information centres which provide a service to inquirers who walk i from the street. The critical nature of the financial crisis faced by many of the centr cannot be overemphasized. Many of them will have to close within the next seven months unless additional funds are made available.

The Provincial Government should assume the responsibility of helping all su ported centres to employ a minimum of one part time paid staff person during th next year. Part time staff will require a minimum of $6,000 for each centre, part o which should come from other services. The minimum staff should be one fu time paid staff as early as economically feasible.

5) It is recommended that the Provincial Government increase its supportin grant from $50,000 to $125,000, beginning in the next fiscal year. This su should be increased by a minimum of 20 per cent each year for the next fi years.

Supplementary grants should be made available to those centres presently in the most desperate financial situations. The additional $75,000 should be used first, to increase financial support to those agencies already receiving a provincial grant. Second, a part of these funds should be used to support a selected number of centres which are eligible for support and which are not now included in the provincial grant system.

E. Eligibility Requirements

The present eligibility guidelines for the receipt of provincial grants seem quite reasonable and should be continued. A key question, however, is who should determine whether or not a centre meets the eligibility guidelines. At present this decision is left to the discretion of the consultant or other officials in the Community Development Branch. In view of some concern expressed by some respondents about government control, some other mechanism for the determination of whether or not a centre meets requirements, should be considered.

Ideally, criteria for funding information centres should be the responsibility of an organization of the neighbourhood and community information centres themselves. However, at present no such organization exists. The majority of respondents expressed considerable feelings that financial accountability should be to the funding body.

6) It is, therefore, recommended that for the present, the Provincial Government continue the application of the present guidelines in the allocation of funds to community and neighbourhood centres. This responsibility should be shared in the event a provincial association of information centres is established.

Program accountability should be to the board of directors of the centre and to its local community.

F. Multiple Funding Machinery

The question of relationships between federal, provincial and municipal governments must be considered as a vital factor in the future development of information services in Ontario. In view of the obvious desirability of multiple financing of information centres, it is important to begin to look at various mechanisms whereby this kind of co-operation can be achieved. The difficulties inherent in each information centre approaching three levels of government, the municipal, provincial and federal, plus the voluntary sector for financing, are quite obvious. The advantages of multiple financing can be seriously compromised if a centre must spend a considerable amount of time seeking funds.

This also raises the question of accountability: should a centre which receives funds from two or more levels of government plus the voluntary sector, also be accountable to each separate funding body? Obviously this is not a desirable pattern and some attention must be given to developing more appropriate machinery for the funding and accountability of community and neighbourhood information centres. This is

not an abstract problem as all three levels of government plus the voluntary sector are presently engaged in supporting one or more community or neighbourhood information centres in Ontario.

Moreover, for various reasons, the large majority of respondents favoured multiple funding for information centres. Most respondents felt that funds should come primarily from provincial and federal sources. The solution to this problem obviously involves delicate negotiations between the provincial and federal governments and perhaps municipal governments. While this research provides no clear guidelines as to the nature of these negotiations, it seems quite obvious that the difficulties inherent in the present system must be explored in negotiations between the various levels of government. The cost sharing arrangements involved in the Canada Assistance Plan might be one model for examination.

7) It is recommended that the Provincial Government initiate discussions with the appropriate federal and municipal departments for developing mechanisms for channelling funds into community and neighbourhood information centres. These discussions should include the development of resources, the utilization of tele-communication systems and the appropriate agency for receiving records, reports and feed-back. It is recommended that the responsibility be lodged in the proposed provincial community information branch.

C. Financing Changing Patterns of Service

Community information centres in Ontario stressed the comprehensiveness of their services and the fact that they were open to everyone in the community. This "open-door" policy is also supported in the guidelines used by the Provincial Government in the allocation of funds to centres. The experiences of the centres serving ethnic and low income communities, however, suggests that criteria should not be too rigidly applied and that some centres in these communities should be funded, at least for an experimental period . . . as for example, the Earlscourt Project.

There is, in some instances, a tendency for some neighbourhood projects to become heavily involved in community action programs. The community may expect the centre to provide leadership in developing new services or in pressing for change in traditional services. The centre may find itself playing a dual role, providing information and referral services and second, becoming involved in social action programs.

Guidelines should be sufficiently flexible, as Kahn suggests, to permit these developments to emerge and be evaluated as they may be meeting genuine community needs. This is particularly related to centres in ethnic communities where more than the usual activities may be required.

The essential criteria should be whether a neighbourhood centre is primarily engaged in providing basic information, direction and referral and second, community action programs, or vice versa. In the first instance the centre should still be eligible for funding from the community development, or the proposed new community information branch. In the second instance, it should seek funds from some other source . . . as for example, the demonstration grants provided by the federal

Department of National Health and Welfare or the provincial Community Development Branch, or voluntary sources.

8) It is recommended that the Provincial Government continue to support neighbourhood information centres located in ethnic and low income areas which do not, in some respects, meet the usual requirements that they serve the total community or have a broadly representative board of directors. If the centre in meeting the needs of its local community, moves beyond the boundaries of an information centre and becomes essentially an action group, then the Provincial Government should help it find other sources of financial support . . . i.e. demonstration grants from other sources as indicated above.

4. Specialized Centres

The development of broadly based comprehensive information centres in Ontario has been accompanied by a parallel development of specialized centres . . . i.e. mental health information centres, information centres for youth and the aged, consumer information centres, and crisis intervention or befriending centres. These centres serve a very useful purpose for special groups and may require financial support from government sources. Their work is often directly related to accessibility to specific government programs. To the extent this relationship exists, these specialized programs should be supported by the appropriate government department.

9) For this reason it is recommended that specialized programs not be supported by the Community Development Branch of the Ontario Department of the Provincial Secretary and Citizenship. The one crisis or befriending centre which is currently being supported by the department should be funded for an additional year while other funding sources are investigated. Local, provincial and federal health departments should be considered as appropriate sources of support for this essentially mental health service. The present funding source, the Community Development Branch, should support these efforts.

5. Facilitating Information Accessibility

A persistent problem about which this study did not inquire, but which came up repeatedly, was the difficulty faced by information centres in obtaining information from some governmental agencies. Many respondents reported the frustration and anger they felt when civil servants made it difficult for them to get the necessary information to meet the needs of their inquirers. It seems essential to establish the principle that, in general, all government information should be public information, in the absence of conclusive evidence that this is not wise.

Obviously, there are some matters which government departments must keep confidential. However, most of the matters dealt with by community information

services relate to various health, welfare and other governmental programs which should be a matter of public knowledge. The behaviour of some officials, it was reported, suggests that they wish to keep knowledge of public services hidden from the public for whose benefit presumably the services were intiated.

10) It is recommended that the Provincial Government initiate discussions with all appropriate departments regarding the feasibility of setting up some type of central information clearing house to which community information centres have easy access. This could be done either by expanding an existing system, such as that already developed by the Department of Mines and Northern Affairs, or by building a new system.

    Further consultations with federal government officials will be necessary to assure that federal government information is equally accessible. Present trends suggest that this will be accomplished through regional Enquiry Centres of Information Canada.

J. Serving the Immigrant Population

Because of the special difficulties encountered by the immigrant population:

11) It is further recommended that local, provincial and federal agencies located in communities containing a considerable ethnic population include representatives from the major ethnic groups on their staffs.

    Essentially the same recommendation was made in a recent study of the needs of the immigrant population, but action has been relatively insignificant. Immediate action is recommended to improve the present situation in all government agencies serving the public.

    The community development, or the proposed community information branch, should assume responsibility for working to implement this recommendation.

K. Periodic Reviews of Centres

The fact that the centres included in this study are still involved in the process of growth and development suggests that the functions, structure, and services of many of the centres will continue to undergo change during the next few years. Continuing provincial funding of these programs should be accompanied by some form of periodic review to determine to what extent the centres conform to, or vary from the provisions included in the present guidelines used as criteria for provincial support. It should be remembered, however, that many directors of the centres express some fear of control by government agencies.

The model for the review of voluntary agency programs, developed by local United Appeals or Community Chests, may be useful in dealing with this problem. This model requires a periodic review, usually every three years, of the total program and operation of all agencies funded by the united fund raising group. An ad hoc independent citizens committee is appointed to perform this task. Its

recommendations serve as the basis for decisions relating to whether or not the agency continues to meet minimum requirements and will continue to receive funds from the funding source.

12) It is recommended that the Community Development Branch, or the proposed new community information branch, initiate plans for the periodic reviews of the operations of all community information centres receiving provincial funds, and that these reviews be conducted by ad hoc independent review committees representing the various population groups in the communities in which the centres are located. The committees should include representation from the centre under review and from community service agencies. Staff services should be provided by the funding body.

    In view of the rapid growth and changing patterns of service experienced by some community information centres, it is recommended that reviews be held every two years for the present. Changing patterns of growth and service delivery may indicate the need for less frequent reviews in the future. Conversely, there may be occasions when circumstances will indicate the need for a special review of a given centre in less than two years.

L. Additional Recommendations

In addition the following recommendations from a recent study, Community Information Centres in Ontario, by Dr. R.A. Hulling, are endorsed and listed below:

a) The office of the provincial co-ordinator of community information services should be responsible for data collection and analysis of feedback, at the expense of the Province. The feedback information should be shared by all community information centres.

b) The office and the provincial co-ordinator of community information services should prepare an information handbook. The handbook should contain standardized information on federal and provincial services. It should be the responsibility of information central offices and neighbourhood information centres to provide the local data.

c) The office of the provincial co-ordinator of community information services should investigate the role of municipal and branch libraries in the information process. Libraries are important community resources for information but are seldom able in their present structures to develop community information systems.

d) The provincial co-ordinator of community information services should enter into discussions with Information Canada, to develop mutually satisfactory policies on the involvement of Information Canada at the local level. There should be provisions for the sharing of expenses, as well as for sharing information feedback. Federal participation could be through the provision of grant systems.

A CONCLUDING NOTE

The emergence of comprehensive community information centres in Ontario is a reflection of the difficulties of citizens in coping with the problems of living in a increasingly complex society, and second, the interest and initiative of citizens seeking a solution at the local level. Local citizens have, in many communities and neighbourhoods, recognized the fact that the vast proliferation of information in modern society does not necessarily meet the needs of citizens for meaningful participation. The development of community information centres represents a significant attempt to bridge this gap.

The findings of this study reflect the fact that individual and group initiative in identifying and attempting to solve local problems is still very much alive in Ontario as in other sections of Canada. They also reflect the fact that most voluntary groups are not able to raise sufficient funds to maintain their programs at an adequate level over long periods of time. Thus the need for public participation in providing funds and other supportive services.

A third aspect of this development is the strongly expressed desire, by citizens, to maintain the independence and autonomy of the centres. The need for public support is not accompanied by a wish to see government "takeover" of the programs. While financial accountability to funding source and program accountability to its own board and to the community is recognized, all centres want to maintain their ability to be responsive to local community needs. Flexibility and freedom of outside control are therefore essential.

The trend toward increasing involvement by governments in education, health, welfare and other programs to meeting human needs has usually been accompanied by increasing government control of these programs. The development of community information centres in Ontario provides the opportunity to reverse this trend, and to move toward a concept of partnership between voluntary and government efforts to cope with the various problems of individual and group living in a complex technological society.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Directors and Selected Board Members

COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRES

I. Aims and Goals

1. Describe briefly the aims and goals of your service as you understand them. (Check all that apply)

   ☐ information
   ☐ direction and referral
   ☐ advice and counselling
   ☐ identify unmet community needs
   ☐ support establishment of neighbourhood centres (if a central service)
   ☐ other (specify)

   b) Are any of the above goals emphasized in particular?

2. In which of the above areas (see Question #1) has your centre had the most success?

3. What are the major drawbacks you have encountered in meeting your goals? Discuss.

II. Structure

4. What is the frequency of board (or management) committee meetings for your centre?
   ☐ monthly
   ☐ bi-monthly
   ☐ quarterly
   ☐ annually
   ☐ other

5. How regular is the attendance of most board members?
   - ☐ very regular
   - ☐ regular
   - ☐ infrequent
   - ☐ not at all

   > Why is this so?

6. How knowledgeable do you feel most board members are re the functioning of the information centre?
   - ☐ extremely knowledgeable
   - ☐ fairly knowledgeable
   - ☐ lack adequate knowledge

7. How well do you feel the board is performing its functions?
   - ☐ extremely well
   - ☐ adequately
   - ☐ not too adequately
   - ☐ inadequately

8. What would be your ideal board composition (i.e. wide community representation, wide agency representation, etc.)?

III. Financing

9. What sources have you approached in your requests for funding? (Check those that apply)
   - ☐ federal government
   - ☐ provincial government
   - ☐ municipal government
   - ☐ private sector
   - ☐ other (specify)

10. In your opinion, is your budget
    - ☐ adequate?
    - ☐ inadequate?

    b) if inadequate, what difficulties has this created?

11. If inadequate, what budget do you need to operate the following levels of service? Please write in amount.
    1) minimal
    2) adequate
    3) optimum

12. How would you make use of additional funds?

13. In the ideal situation, who do you feel should be responsible for funding community information centres?
    (Check as many as apply)
    a) federal government ☐
       provincial government ☐
       municipal government ☐
       private sector ☐

    b) Discuss your reasons for the above choice.

    c) If a combination of the above was chosen, what do you feel is the appropriate proportion of funding responsibility to be accepted by each group?

14. Do you feel it is important to have a set of standards set up as criteria for funding eligibility?
    yes ☐ no ☐

    b) Why do you feel this way?

    c) If yes, what types of standards do you envision?

d) How rigidly should they be applied?

e) By what organization or agency should they be applied?

15. Discuss your opinions re the appropriate accountability (financial and program) for information services.

b) What safeguards can you envision to protect your independence, if this is an important issue to you?

16. From your point of view, what type of body should be responsible for?

a) Collecting and tabulating feedback data for your operation:

- ☐ federal agency
- ☐ provincial agency
- ☐ municipal agency
- ☐ voluntary agency at community level
- ☐ independent organization (i.e. a national council)
- ☐ your own centre
- ☐ other (specify)

b) Please discuss your reasons for your choice.

IV. Operation

18. Briefly describe your facilities for handling inquiries,
    i.e. ☐ number of telephones
    ☐ number of interview rooms
    ☐ written inquiries

    b) Why did you choose your type of arrangement in setting up your centre?

19. If crisis calls come in, how does your centre handle them?

20. Have you devised methods of up-dating your information files?

    yes ☐ no ☐

    If yes, describe briefly.

21. Do you have any source of professional advice when a problem arises outside the experience of your service?

    yes ☐ no ☐

    If yes, describe briefly.

22. Do you have any programs or procedure to keep staff well-informed of new developments?

    yes ☐ no ☐

    b) If yes, describe briefly.

23. Has your centre ever experienced difficulties in gaining suitable information from government or voluntary agencies?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If yes, describe briefly.

24. Does your centre have a telephone tie-line with any other centre or centres?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If not, do you feel the need for one?

yes ☐ no ☐

25. Does your centre have any systematic follow-up procedure to check whether directed or referred clients received satisfactory service?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If, yes describe briefly.

c) If no, do you feel a need for such a follow-up procedure?

26. How do new residents in your community presently learn about your information centre?

b) What do you think should be done to help new residents learn about your centre?

27. At what capacity is your centre operating (i.e. that capacity which can best serve the community)?

- ☐ above capacity
- ☐ at capacity
- ☐ below capacity

b) If operating at above or below capacity, what do you feel is needed to change the situation?

28. Do you publish periodically a directory of social services?

yes ☐ no ☐

V. Staffing

29. Do you have a multilingual staff to handle inquiries in more than one language?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If yes, which languages?

c) If not, do you feel there is a need for such facilities and staff in your centre?

yes ☐ no ☐

d) If your centre already has multilingual staff, do you feel there is a need for more such personnel in your centre?

yes ☐ no ☐

30. Do you use volunteers in your program?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If yes, have you had any difficulty in recuiting volunteers?

yes ☐ no ☐

c) If yes, what do you think can be done to improve the situation?

31. Do you have any orientation programs for volunteers prior to their beginning work?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If yes, describe briefly.

32. Who ideally do you feel should handle a training program for volunteers?

- ☐ federal agency
- ☐ provincial agency
- ☐ municipal agency
- ☐ voluntary agency
- ☐ independent organization
- ☐ your own centre
- ☐ other (specify)

b) Describe briefly the reasons for your choice.

33. (If centre uses only volunteer staff): Do you feel a need for a paid co-ordinator to direct volunteer activities?

a) full-time yes ☐ no ☐
b) part-time yes ☐ no ☐

b) Why?

34. What job functions do you emphasize for volunteers in your centre?

a) clerical tasks, including cataloging, filing, etc.
b) contact, interviewing of public
c) both clerical and public contact
d) other (specify)

35. Do you have any programs for upgrading the skills of volunteers once they are on the job at your centre?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If yes, describe briefly.

36. In general, how would you rate the performance of most volunteers in your centre?

- ☐ extremely satisfactory
- ☐ satisfactory
- ☐ fairly satisfactory
- ☐ unsatisfactory

VI. Relationships

37. (If a central service): Are there local neighbourhood information or special interest centres (e.g. Mental Health) set up in your city?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If yes, describe briefly.

38. Do you feel the government has any role in acting as a consultant to neighbourhood services at the local level (i.e. providing travelling consultants)?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) What level of government would be most appropriate for this role?

- ☐ federal
- ☐ provincial
- ☐ municipal

c) Why?

d) What is the nature of your contact with local neighbourhood centres?

39. (If a neighbourhood centre): What is the nature of your contact with the central service?

b) Would you say that these contacts are?
- ☐ very frequent
- ☐ frequent
- ☐ infrequent

c) How satisfactory is this level of contact?

d) What would be the ideal situation?

40. Approximately how many organizations or agencies refer clients to your centre?

a) regularly ☐
b) occasionally ☐
c) infrequently ☐

41. Do you have any form of co-operation or liaison with branches of government or community services (i.e. library, Information Canada, Dept. of Mines and Northern Affairs) for the purpose of pooling information resources?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If yes, describe briefly.

c) If not, do you plan such co-operation in the future?

yes ☐ no ☐

d) Describe briefly, including any problems.

42. Do you have any special plans for the future development of your information centre?

yes ☐ no ☐

b) If yes, please describe briefly.

43. What are your estimated budgetary needs for each of the next five years?

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

APPENDIX B

Suggested Questions for Agencies

1. What is the nature of your contact with the information centre? Check as many items as apply.

   ☐ accept referrals from it
   ☐ send referrals to it
   ☐ represented on board of directors
   ☐ other (specify)

2. In general how frequently does your agency make referrals to the information centre?

   ☐ less than once a month
   ☐ monthly
   ☐ 2 or more times a month

3. What do you consider the most important community needs being met by the centre?

4. In your view what additional services should the centre provide which it isn't providing at present?

5. What do you see as the major strength of the information service as it presently operates?

   (a) quality of staff
   (b) quality of board
   (c) community relations
   (d) quality of service
   (e) other

6. What do you see as some of the major shortcomings of the information centre?

7. What has been the effect of the information centre on your agency program?

8. Do you feel the information centre is duplicating any other community service?

   yes ☐ no ☐

   If yes, which one(s)?

   How can this be overcome?

9. What do you perceive as the main aims and goals of the information service?

10. To what extent do you feel these goals and aims are being achieved?

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE TO INQUIRERS

1. How long have you known of the community information centre?
   a) more than three months ☐
   b) between one and three months ☐
   c) less than one month ☐

2. How did you learn of the existence of the centre?
   a) through friends or relatives ☐
   b) newspaper publicity ☐
   c) radio or T.V. ☐
   d) churches or social clubs ☐
   e) social service agencies ☐
   f) other (specify) ☐

3. Have your contacts with the information centre been?
   a) by telephone ☐
   b) by personal visit ☐

4. In general, what would you say was the nature of the information you needed? Check as many as apply.
   a) general welfare services ☐
   b) programs for aged people ☐
   c) on behalf of children or youth (recreation, day care, etc.) ☐
   d) housing, hospital or health services ☐
   e) educational programs ☐
   f) other (specify) ☐

5. How many contacts with individuals or other agencies did you make before calling the information centre?
   0–3 ☐
   4–6 ☐
   7–9 ☐
   over ☐

6. After calling the information centre, were you successful in obtaining the actual service you needed?
   successful ☐ unsuccessful ☐

7. To what extent were you satisfied with the information provided by the centre?

very satisfied ☐
generally satisfied ☐
dissatisfied ☐
very dissatisfied ☐

8. What did you particularly like or dislike about the centre?

9. What suggestions would you have for improving the service?

10. How frequently have you used the services of the centre?

a) only once ☐
b) two to four times ☐
c) five or more times ☐

Now we would appreciate your answers to a few questions about your personal situation.

11. Were you born in Canada or did you migrate from outside of the country?

a) born in Canada ☐
b) born outside the country ☐

12. If born outside of Canada, would you prefer to have the information centre counsellor deal with your request in your native language?

yes ☐ no ☐

For the following questions, I will read out to you the appropriate groupings. Please indicate the category that applies to you.

13. Please indicate the level of education you reached in school.

a) less than 6 years ☐
b) between 6 to 10 years ☐
c) between 11 to 13 years ☐
d) over 13 years ☐

14. Please indicate your age level in the following groupings:

a) less than 20 years of age ☐
b) 21 to 35 years of age ☐
c) 36 to 60 years of age ☐
d) more than 60 years of age ☐

APPENDIX D

Region	Munic.	Info. C.

Date: _____/71

_____

1 Office Hours (A)
2 After Hours

Initial Contact (B)
10 Public – Self & Relatives
11 Public – Other
12 Health, Welfare, Rec'n
13 Other Gov't Service
14 Business, Labour
15 Professions & Assoc'ns
16

Contact by (C)
20 Telephone
21 Interview
22 Correspondence
23 Answering Service

Type of Enquiry (D)
30 Service Enquiry
31 Address, Phone No. or Name Only

Special Groupings (E)
40 Aged – 60 up
41 Handicapped
42 Youth 16-21
43 Immigrants
44 Migrants
45 Language Problem
46

Category of Enquiry (F)
50 Accommodation
51 Adjustment – Family, Indiv.
52 Child Welfare
53 Employment & Vocational
54 Financial
55 Health – Physical, Mental
56 Home Services
57 Landlord and Tenant
58 Consumer
59 Rec'n, Educ'n, Vac'n
60 Legal
61 Other
62 General
63 Dental Care
64 Government Benefits
65

70 Multi-Problem (G)

73 Urgent (H)

Disposition (J)
80 Referral (I.C. made contact)
81 Direction (caller to contact)
82 Referral or Direction Back
83 Advice and Guidance Only
84 Information Only
85 Other

88 Needed Service doubtful (K) or not available

Service Ref. or Dir. to (L)
90 Municipal Welfare
91 Prov'l Welfare
92 Canada Manpower
93 Un. Insurance
94 Natnl. Health & Welfare
95 Immigration
96 Public Health
97 Doctors
98 Ont. Housing
99 Sr. Citizens Housing
100 Hostels – Adults
101 Hostels – Youth
102 FSA's
103 CAS's
104 Legal Aid
105 Lld – Tenant Bureau
106 Day Nurseries
107 Missions, Churches
108 Sr. Citizens Clubs
109 Other

Area of Client (M)
120
121
122
123
124
125

Found I.C. through (N)
140 Agency
141 News Media
142 Telephone Book
143 Other

Agency Requested (O)
150
151
152
153
154
155
156
157
158
159
160
161
162
163
164
165

Client's Name _____ Age _____ Mil. or Other No. _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Children No. _____ Ages _____ Religion if Applicable _____

Initial Contact By _____

Comments: